

"MISS PATTY PACE ADVANCED [illegible]

The Lamplighter

BY

MISS CUMMINS

"Celestial Patience! how thou dost defeat
The foe's proud menace, and elude his hate
While Passion takes his part—betrays our peace—
To death and torture swells each slight disgrace.
By not opposing, thou dost ills destroy,
And wear thy conquered sorrows into joy"
—YOUNG, *Force of Religion*, Book ii

His lamp now burns brightly in heaven, and its light is not yet gone out on earth.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Maria Susanna Cummins was born in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1827, her father being Judge David Cummins. *The Lamplighter*, issued in 1864, was her first published book, and attained a speedy popularity. Her other books include the following: *Mabel Vaughan* (1857), *El Fureidis* (1860), and *Haunted Hearts* (1864). She died in 1866.

Contents

The Lamplighter

CHAPTER I

LIGHT IN DARKNESS

IT was growing dark in the city. Out in the open country it would be light for half an hour or more; but within the close streets where my story leads me it was already dusk. Upon the door-step of a low-roofed, dark, and unwholesome-looking house sat a little girl, who was gazing up the street with much earnestness. The house-door, which was open behind her, was close to the side-walk; and the step on which she sat was so low that her little unshod feet rested on the cold bricks. It was a chilly evening in November, and a light fall of snow, which had made everything look bright and clean in the pleasant, open squares near which the fine houses of the city were built, had only served to render the narrow streets and dark lanes dirtier and more cheerless than ever; for, mixed with the mud and filth which abound in those neighbourhoods where the poor are crowded together, the beautiful snow had lost all its purity.

A great many people were passing to and fro, bent on their various errands of duty or of pleasure, but no one noticed the little girl, for there was no one in the world who cared for her. She was scantily clad, in garments of the poorest description. Her hair was long and thick, uncombed and unbecoming, if anything could be said to be unbecoming to a set of features which, to a casual observer, had not a single attraction—being thin and sharp, while her complexion was sallow, and her whole appearance unhealthy.

She had, to be sure, fine dark eyes; but so unnaturally large did they seem, in contrast to her puny face, that they only increased the peculiarity of it, without enhancing its beauty. Had

anyone felt any interest in her, had she had a mother (which, alas! she had not), those friendly and partial eyes would perhaps have found something in her to praise. As it was, the poor little thing was told, a dozen times a day, that she was the worst-looking child in the world; and, what was more, the worst-behaved No one loved her, and she loved no one; no one treated her kindly; no one tried to make her happy, or cared whether she were so. She was but eight years old, and alone in the world.

There was only one whom she found pleasure in. She loved to watch for the coming of the old man who lit the street-lamp in front of the house where she lived; to see the bright torch he carried flicker in the wind, and then, when he ran up his ladder, lit the lamp so quickly and easily, and made the whole place seem cheerful, one gleam of joy was shed on a little desolate heart, to which gladness was a stranger; and though he had never seemed to see, and certainly had never spoken to her, she almost felt, as she watched for the old lamplighter, as if he were a friend.

"Gerty," exclaimed a harsh voice within, "have you been for the milk?"

The child made no answer, but gliding off the door-step ran quickly round the corner, and hid a little out of sight

"What's become of that child?" said the woman from whom the voice proceeded, and who now showed herself at the door.

A boy who was passing, and had seen Gerty run, laughed aloud, pointed to the corner which concealed her, and walking off, exclaimed to himself as he went, "She'll catch it!"

In a moment more, Gerty was dragged from her hiding-place, and with one blow for her ugliness and another for her impudence (for she was making faces at Nan Grant), was despatched for the milk.

She ran fast, for she feared the lamplighter would come and go in her absence, and was rejoiced, on her return, to catch sight of him, just going up his ladder. She stationed herself at the foot of it, and was so engaged in watching the bright flame that she did not observe when the man began to descend; and, as she was directly in his way, he struck against her as he sprang to the ground, and she fell upon the pavement "Hollo, my little one!" exclaimed he, "how's this?" as he stooped to lift her up

She was upon her feet in an instant, for she was used to hard knocks, and did not much mind a few bruises. But the milk was all spilt.

"Well, I declare!" said the man, "that's too bad!" and, for the first time looking full in Gerty's face, he interrupted himself with, "My! what an odd-faced child!" then, seeing that she looked apprehensively at the spilt milk, he added, kindly, "She won't be hard on such a mite as you, will she? Cheer up! never mind if she does scold you a little. I'll bring you something to-morrow that I think you'll like. And, mind, if the old woman makes a row, tell her I did it. But what was you doing with my ladder?"

"I was seeing you light the lamp," said Gerty; "but I wish I hadn't spilt the milk."

At this moment Nan Grant came to the door, saw what had happened, and commenced pulling the child into the house, amidst blows and threats. The lamplighter tried to appease her; but she shut the door in his face. Gerty was scolded, beaten, deprived of the crust which she usually got for her supper, and shut up in her dark attic for the night. Poor little child! Her mother had died in Nan Grant's house five years before, and she had been tolerated there since, not so much because when Ben Grant went to sea he bade his wife be sure and keep the child until his return, but because Nan had reasons of her own for doing so, and, though she considered Gerty a dead weight upon her hands, she did not care to excite enquiries by trying to dispose of her elsewhere.

When Gerty first found herself locked up for the night in the dark garret she stood for a minute perfectly still; then suddenly began to stamp and scream, tried to beat open the door, and shouted, "I hate you, Nan Grant!" But nobody came near her, and, after a while, she grew more quiet, threw herself down on her miserable bed, covered her face with her thin little hands, and sobbed and cried as if her heart would break. She wept until she was utterly exhausted, and then gradually grew quite still. By and by she took away her hands from her face, clasped them together in a convulsive manner, and looked up at a little glazed window by the side of the bed. It was but three panes of glass unevenly stuck together, and was the only chance of light the room had. There was no moon, but as Gerty looked up, she saw shining down upon her *one* bright star. She thought she had never seen anything half so beautiful. She had often been out of doors when the sky was full of stars, and had not noticed them much; but this one, all alone, so large, so bright, and yet so soft and pleasant-looking, seemed to say, "Gerty! Gerty! *poor* little Gerty!" She thought it seemed like a kind face, such as she

had a long time ago seen or dreamt about. Suddenly it flashed through her mind, "Who lit it? Some good person, I know! Oh! how could he get up so high?" And Gerty fell asleep, wondering who lit the star.

Poor little benighted soul! Who shall enlighten thee? Thou art God's child, little one! Christ died for thee. Will He not send man or angel to light up the darkness within, to kindle a light that shall never go out, the light that shall shine through all eternity.

CHAPTER II

AWAKENED SYMPATHY

Gerty awoke the next morning, not as children wake who are roused by each other's merry voices or by a parent's kiss, who have kind hands to help them to dress, and know that a nice breakfast awaits them; but she heard harsh voices below; knew, from the sound, that the men who lived at Nan Grant's had come in to breakfast, and that her only chance of obtaining any share of the meal was to be on the spot when they had finished, to take that portion of what remained which Nan might chance to throw towards her. So she crept downstairs, waited a little out of sight until she smelt the smoke of the men's pipes as they passed through the passage, and when they had all gone noisily out, she slid into the room, looking about her with a glance made up of fear and defiance She met but a rough greeting from Nan, who told her she had better drop that ugly sour look, eat some breakfast if she wanted it, but take care and not come near the fire, or she'd get another dressing, worse than she had last night.

Gerty had not looked for any other treatment, so there was no disappointment to bear, but, glad enough of the miserable food left for her on the table, swallowed it eagerly, and, waiting no second bidding to keep herself out of the way, took her old hood, threw on a ragged shawl, and, though her hands and feet were chilled by the sharp air of the morning, ran out of the house.

Back of the building where Nan Grant lived was a large wood- and coal-yard, and beyond that a wharf, and the thick muddy water of a dock. Gerty might have found playmates

enough in the neighbourhood of this place. She sometimes did mingle with the troops of boys and girls, equally ragged with herself, who played about in the yard, but not often—there was a league against her among the children of the place. Poor, ragged, and miserably cared for as most of them were, they all knew that Gerty was still more neglected and abused They had often seen her beaten, and daily heard her called an ugly, wicked child; told that she belonged to nobody, and had no business in anyone's house Children as they were, they felt their advantage, and scorned the little outcast.

It was a sunshiny though a cold day when Gerty ran to seek shelter in the wood-yard There was an immense pile of timber in one corner, almost out of sight of any of the houses Near the top was a little sheltered recess, overhung by some planks, and forming a miniature shed, protected by the wood on all sides but one, and from that looking out upon the water.

This was Gerty's haven of rest, and the only place from which she never was driven away Here, through the long summer days, the little lonesome child sat brooding over her griefs, sometimes weeping for hours Now and then, when the course of her life had been smooth for a few days, she would get a little more cheerful, and enjoy watching the sailors belonging to a schooner hard by as they laboured on board their vessel. The warm sunshine was so pleasant, and the men's voices at their work so lively, that the poor little thing would for a time forget her woes

But summer had gone. The schooner and the sailors, who had been such pleasant company, had gone too The weather was now cold, and for a few days it had been so stormy that Gerty had been obliged to stay in the house. Now, however, she made her way to her little hiding-place, and, to her joy, the sunshine had reached the spot before her, dried up the boards, so that they felt warm to her bare feet, and was still shining so bright and pleasant that Gerty forgot Nan Grant, and how much she dreaded the long winter Her thoughts rambled about some time, but at last settled down upon the kind look and voice of the old lamplighter, and then, for the first time since the promise was made, it came into her mind that he had engaged to bring her something the next time he came.

What could he mean to bring? Would it be something to eat? O, if it were only some shoes!

At any rate, Gerty resolved to go for her milk in season, so that nothing should prevent her seeing him

The day seemed unusually long, but darkness came at last,

and with it True—or rather Trueman—Flint, for that was the lamplighter's name.

True was late about his work that night, and in a great hurry. He had only time to speak a few words in his rough way to Gerty, but they were words coming straight from as good a heart as ever throbbed He put his hand on her head in the kindest way, told her how sorry he was she got hurt, and said, "It was a plaguy shame she should have been whipped too, and all for a spill o' milk".

"But here," added he, diving into one of his pockets, "here's the critter I promised you. Take good care on't; and I'm thinking, if it's like the mother that I've got at home, 'twon't be a little ye'll be likin' it. Good-bye, my little gal;" and he shouldered his ladder and went off, leaving in Gerty's hands a little grey-and-white kitten

Gerty was so taken by surprise on finding in her arms a live kitten, that she stood for a minute irresolute what to do with it There were a great many cats, of all sizes and colours, inhabitants of the neighbouring houses and yard Gerty had often felt a sympathy for them, but never thought of trying to catch one and carry it home, for she knew that food and shelter were most grudgingly accorded to herself, and would not certainly be extended to her pets Her first thought, therefore, was to throw the kitten down and let it run away

But while she was hesitating, the little animal pleaded for itself in a way she could not resist It crept from Gerty's arms up to her neck, clung there tight, and with its low, feeble cries seemed to ask her to take care of it. Its eloquence prevailed over all fear of Nan Grant's anger. She hugged pussy to her bosom, and made a childish resolve to love it, and above all, keep it out of Nan's sight

How much she came in time to love that kitten no words can tell Her little fierce, untamed nature had hitherto only expressed itself in angry passion and sullen obstinacy. But there were in her soul fountains of warm affection yet unstirred, and a warmth and devotion of nature that wanted only an object to expend themselves upon.

So she poured out such wealth of love on the little creature that clung to her for its support as only such a desolate little heart has to spare She kept it, as much as possible, out among the boards in her own favourite haunt She found an old hat, in which she placed her own hood, to make a bed for pussy, and she carried it a part of her own scanty meals So she would play with her kitten for hours among the boards, talk to it,

and tell it how much she loved it. But when the days were very cold she was often puzzled to know how to keep herself warm out of doors, and the risk of bringing the kitten into the house was great She would then hide it in her bosom, and run with it into the little garret-room where she slept, and, taking care to keep the door shut, usually eluded Nan's eyes and ears. Once or twice, when she had been off her guard, her little playful pet had escaped from her, and scampered through the lower room and passage. Once Nan drove it out with a broom, but in that thickly peopled region cats and kittens were not so uncommon as to excite enquiry.

It may seem strange that Gerty had leisure to spend all her time at play. But Nan Grant had but a poor opinion of children's services at the best, and never tried to find employment for Gerty, much better satisfied if she would only keep out of her sight, so that, except the daily errand for the milk, Gerty was always idle,—a fruitful source of unhappiness and dis content, if she had suffered from no other

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CHAPTER III

COMFORT IN AFFLICTION

When Gerty had had her kitten about a month she took a violent cold from being out in the damp and rain; and Nan, fearing she should have trouble with her if she became seriously ill, bade her stay in the house, and keep in the warm room where she was at work. Gerty's cough was fearful, and it would have been a great comfort to sit by the fire all day, had it not been for her anxiety about the kitten, lest it should be lost, or starve, before she was well enough to be out taking care of it; or, worst of all, come running into the house in search of her. The whole day passed away, however, and nothing was seen of pussy. Towards night the men were heard coming in to supper. Just as they entered the door of the room where Nan and Gerty were, and where the coarse meal was prepared, one of them stumbled over the kitten, which had come in with them unperceived.

"What's this 'ere?" said the man, whom they called Jemmy; "a cat, I vow! Why, Nan, I thought you hated cats?"

"Well, 'ta'n't none o' mine, drive it out," said Nan.

Jemmy started to do so; but puss, suddenly drawing back,

sprang into the arms of Gerty, who was anxiously watching its fate.

"Whose kitten's that?" said Nan

"Mine!" said Gerty bravely.

"How long have you kept cats, I should like to know?" said Nan "Speak! how came you by this?"

The men were all looking on. Gerty was afraid of them. They sometimes teased, and were always a source of alarm to her. She was silent, and burst into tears.

"Come," said Jemmy, "give us some supper, Nan, and let the gal alone."

Nan complied, ominously muttering, however.

The supper was just finished, when an organ-grinder, with a monkey, struck up a tune just outside the door. Gerty ran to the window to look out Delighted with the gambols of the monkey, she gazed so intently that she did not miss the kitten, which, in the meantime, crept down from her arms, and, springing upon the table, began to devour the remnants of the repast The organ-grinder was not out of sight when Gerty's eyes fell upon the figure of the old lamplighter coming up the street She thought she would stay and watch him light his lamp, when she was startled by a sharp and angry exclamation from Nan, and turned just in time to see her snatch her darling kitten from the table Gerty sprang forward to the rescue, and caught Nan by the arm; but she firmly pushed her back with one hand, while with the other she threw the kitten half across the room. Gerty heard a sudden splash and a piercing cry. Nan had flung the poor creature into a large vessel of steaming-hot water, which stood ready for some household purpose The little animal struggled and writhed an instant, then died in torture.

All the fury of Gerty's nature was roused. She lifted a stick of wood, which lay near her, and flung it at Nan with all her strength. It struck the woman on the head The blood started from the wound the blow had given; but Nan hardly felt the blow, so greatly was she excited against the child. She sprang upon her, caught her by the shoulder, and, opening the door, thrust her out upon the side-walk. "Ye'll never darken my doors again, yer imp of wickedness!" said she, as she rushed into the house, leaving the child alone in the cold, dark night.

When Gerty found herself in the street she commenced screaming—not from fear at being turned away from her only home—she did not think of herself for a moment. Horror and grief at the dreadful fate of the only thing she loved in

the world entirely filled her little soul. So she crouched down against the side of the house, her face hid in her hands, unconscious of the noise she was making. Suddenly she found herself lifted up and placed on one of the rounds of Trueman Flint's ladder, which still leaned against the lamp-post True held her firmly, just high enough on the ladder to bring her face opposite his, recognized her as his old acquaintance, and asked her what was the matter.

But Gerty could only gasp and say, "O, my kitten! my kitten!' —"What! the kitten I gave you? Well, have you lost it? Don't cry! there—don't cry!"—"O, no! not lost! O, poor kitty!" and Gerty began to cry louder than ever, and coughed at the same time so dreadfully, that True was quite frightened. Making every effort to soothe her, and having partially succeeded, he told her she would catch her death o' cold, and she must go into the house.—"Oh, she won't let me in!" said Gerty, "and I wouldn't go, if she would!"—"Who won't let you in?—your mother?"—"No! Nan Grant."—"Who's Nan Grant?"—"She's a horrid wicked woman, that drowned my kitten in bilin' water." —"But where's your mother?"—"I ha'n't got none"—"Who do you belong to, you poor little thing?"—"Nobody; and I've no business anywhere!"—"But who do you live with, and who takes care of you?"—"O, I lived with Nan Grant; but I hate her."—"Hush! hush! you mus'n't say that! I'll go and speak to her."

True moved towards the door, trying to draw Gerty in with him, but she resisted so forcibly that he left her outside, and walking directly into the room, where Nan was binding up her head, told her she had better call her little girl in, for she would freeze to death out there.

"She's no child of mine," said Nan; "she's been here long enough; she's the worst little creature that ever lived, it's a wonder I've kept her so long, and now I hope I'll never lay eyes on her agin She ought to be hung for breaking my head!"

"But what'll become of her?" said True "It's a fearful cold night How'd you feel, marm, if she were found to-morrow morning all *friz* up on your door-step?"

"How'd I feel?—That's your business, is it? S'posen you take care on her yourself! Carry her home, and try how yer like her. Yer've been here a-talkin' to me about her once afore, and I tell you I won't hear a word more. Let other folks see to her, I say, I've had more'n my share; and, as to her freezin', or dyin' anyhow, I'll risk her Them children that comes into the world nobody knows how, don't go out of it in a hurry"

True did not wait to hear more. Nan's flashing eyes and menacing attitude were sufficient warning of the coming tempest, and he wisely hastened away before it should burst upon his head.

Gerty had ceased crying when he came out, and looked up into his face with the greatest interest.

"Well," said he, "she says you sha'n't come back."—"O, I'm so glad!" said Gerty.—"But where'll you go to?"—"I don't know; p'r'aps I'll go with you, and see you light the lamps."—"But where'll you sleep to-night?"—"I don't know where; I haven't got any home; I'll sleep out where I can see the stars."—"My goodness! You'll freeze to death, child."

"Well, what'll become of me, then?"

"The Lord only knows!"

True looked at Gerty in distress. He could not leave her there, such a cold night; but he hardly knew what he could do with her if he took her home, for he lived alone, and was poor. But another violent coughing spell decided him at once to share with her his shelter, fire, and food for one night at least. So he took her by the hand, saying, "Come with me"; and Gerty ran along confidently by his side, never asking whither.

Gerty watched him light the lamps with as keen an interest as if that were the only object for which she was in his company; and it was only after they had reached the corner of the street, and walked on for some distance without stopping, that she enquired where they were going

"Going home," said True.

"Am I going to your home?" said Gerty.

"Yes," said True, "and here it is."

He opened a little gate close to the side-walk. It led into a small and very narrow yard, which stretched along the whole length of a decent two-storied house True lived in the back part of the house, so they went through the yard, passed by several windows and the main entrance, and, keeping on to a small door in the rear, opened it and went in There was a stove in the room into which they had entered, but no fire in it True made as much haste as he could to dispose of his ladder, &c, in an adjoining shed, and then, bringing in a handful of wood, he lit a fire In a few minutes there was a bright blaze, and the chilly atmosphere grew warm. Drawing an old wooden settle up to the fire, he threw his shaggy greatcoat over it, and lifting little Gerty up, he placed her gently upon the comfortable seat He then went to work to get supper. He made tea, then, mixing a great mug full for Gerty, with plenty of sugar and all his milk, he produced from a little cupboard a loaf of bread, cut a huge slice, and pressed her to eat

and drink as much as she could; for he judged well when he concluded, from her looks, that she had not always been well fed.

Trueman Flint, previous to his entering upon the service in which we find him, had been for some time a porter in a large store, owned by a wealthy and generous merchant Being one day engaged in removing some heavy casks, he had the misfortune to be severely injured by one of them falling upon his chest. For a long time no hope was entertained of his recovering from the effects of the accident; and when he at last began to mend, his health returned so gradually that it was a year before he was able to be at work again. This sickness swallowed up the savings of years; but his late employer never allowed him to want for any comforts, provided an excellent physician, and saw that he was well taken care of.

True, however, had never been the same man since. He rose up from his sick-bed ten years older in constitution, and his strength so much enfeebled, that he was only fit for some comparatively light employment. It was then that his kind friend obtained for him the situation he now held as lamplighter, in addition to which, he frequently earned considerable sums by sawing wood, shovelling snow, and other occasional jobs

But we left Gerty finishing her supper; and now, when we return to her, she is stretched upon the wide settle, sound asleep, covered up with a warm blanket, and her head resting upon a pillow True sits beside her; her little thin hand lies in his great palm—occasionally he draws the blanket closer round her. She breathes hard, suddenly she gives a nervous start, then speaks quickly: her dreams are evidently troubled. True listens intently to her words, as she exclaims eagerly, "O, don't! don't drown my kitty!" and then, again, in a voice of fear, "O, she'll catch me! she'll catch me!" and now her tones are touchingly plaintive and earnest,—"Dear, good old man! let me stay with you!"

Tears are in Trueman Flint's eyes and rolling down the furrows of his cheeks; he lays his head on the pillow and draws Gerty's little face close to his, at the same time smoothing her long, uncombed hair with his hand. He, too, is thinking aloud,—what does *he* say?

"Catch you!—no, she *sha'n't*! Stay with *me*!—so you shall, I promise you, poor little birdie! All alone in this big world—and so am I. Please God, we'll bide together."

CHAPTER IV

THE LAW OF KINDNESS

The morning after True took her home, Gerty woke in a high fever, her head and limbs aching, and with every symptom of severe illness. She looked around, and found she was alone in the room, but there was a good fire, and preparation for breakfast. For a moment or two she was puzzled to know where she was, and what had happened to her, for the room seemed quite strange, now that she first saw it by daylight. A look of happiness passed over her little sick face when she recalled the events of the previous night, and thought of kind old True, and the new home she had found with him. She got up and went to the window to look out, though her head was strangely giddy, and she tottered so that she could hardly walk. The ground was covered with snow, and it was still stormy without. It seemed as if the snow dazzled Gerty's eyes, for she suddenly found herself quite blinded—her head grew dizzy, she staggered and fell.

Trueman came in a moment after, and was very much frightened at seeing Gerty stretched upon the floor, but soon found out the real state of the case, for he had made up his mind during the night that she was a very sick child, and was not surprised that she had fainted in endeavouring to walk. He placed her in bed, and soon succeeded in restoring her to consciousness; but for three weeks from that time she never sat up, except when True held her in his arms. True knew a good deal about sickness, was something of a doctor and nurse in his simple way; and though he never had much to do with children, his warm heart was a trusty guide, and taught him all that was necessary for Gerty's comfort, and far, far more kindness than she had ever experienced before.

Gerty was very patient. She would sometimes lie awake whole nights suffering from pain and extreme weariness at her long confinement to a sick-bed, without uttering a groan, or making any noise, lest she might waken True. Her little heart was full of love and gratitude to her kind protector, and she spent much of her time in thinking what she could ever do for him when she got well, and wondering whether she were capable of ever learning to do any good thing at all. True was often obliged to leave her, to attend to his work; and during the first week of her sickness, she was much alone, though everything she could possibly want was put within her reach, and many a caution given to her to keep still

in bed until his return. At last, however, she grew delirious, and for some days had no knowledge how she was taken care of One day, after a long and quiet sleep, she woke, restored to sense and consciousness, and saw a woman sitting by her bedside, sewing

She sprang up in bed to look at the stranger, who had not observed her open her eyes, but who started the moment she heard her move, and exclaimed, "O, lie down, my child!" at the same time laying her hand gently upon her to enforce the injunction

"I don't know you," said Gerty; "where's my Uncle True?"

"He's gone out, dear; he'll be home soon How do you feel—better?"

"O, yes! much better. Have I been asleep long?"

"Some time, lie down now, and I'll bring you some gruel."

"Does Uncle True know you are here?"

"Yes I came in to sit with you while he was away."

"Came in?—From where?"

"From my room. I live in the other part of the house.'

"I think you're very good," said Gerty. "I like you. I wonder why I did not see you when you came in."

"You were too sick, dear, to notice, but I think you'll soon be better now."

The woman prepared the gruel, and after Gerty had taken it, reseated herself at her work Gerty lay down in bed, and, fixing her large eyes upon her, watched her some time while she sat sewing At last the woman looked up and said, "Well, what do you think I'm making?"

"I don't know," said Gerty, "what are you?"

The woman held up her work, so that Gerty could see that it was a dark calico frock for a child

"O, what a nice gown!" said Gerty. "Who is it for?—Your little girl?"

"No," said the woman; "I haven't got any little girl, I've only got one child, my boy Willie"

"Willie, that's a pretty name," said Gerty. "Is he a good boy?"

"Good? He's the best boy in the world!" answered the woman, her pale, care-worn face lit up with all a mother's pride

Gerty turned away, and a look so unnaturally sad for a child came over her countenance that the woman thought she was getting tired, and ought to be kept very quiet She told her so, and bade her shut her eyes and go to sleep again Gerty obeyed the first injunction, and lay so still that the latter

seemed in a fair way to be fulfilled, when the door opened gently and True came in.

"O! Mrs. Sullivan," said he, "you're here still! I'm very much obleeged to you for stayin'. And how does the child seem to be?"

"Much better, Mr. Flint. She's come to her reason, and I think will do very well now. O! she's awake," she added, seeing Gerty open her eyes

True came up to the bedside, stroked back her hair, now cut short and neatly arranged, and nodded his head satisfactorily Gerty caught his great hand between both of hers, and held it tight He sat down on the side of the bed, and, glancing at Mrs. Sullivan's work, said, "I shouldn't be surprised if she needed her new clothes sooner than we thought for."

"So I was thinking," said Mrs. Sullivan; "but don't be in too great a hurry. Did you see Miss Graham to-day?"

"Yes, I did see her, poor thing! The Lord bless her sweet face! She axed a sight o' questions about little Gerty, and gave me this parcel of *arrer*root. Did you ever fix any, Mrs. Sullivan, so that you can jist show me how, if you'll be so good; for I declare I don't remember, though she took a deal o' pains to tell me"

"O, yes, it's very easy. I'll come in and prepare some by and by But father has come home, and I must be seeing about our tea"

"Thank you; you're very kind."

During the few following days Mrs Sullivan came in and sat with Gerty several times She always brought her work with her, which was usually some child's garment that she was making.

One evening, when Gerty had nearly recovered, she was sitting in True's lap by the fire, carefully wrapped up in a blanket She had been talking to him about her new friend, suddenly, looking up in his face, she said—"Uncle True, do you know what little girl she's making a gown for?"

"For a little girl," said True, "that needs a gown, and a good many other things, for she hasn't got any clothes, as I know on, except a few old rags Do you know any such little girl, Gerty?"

"I guess I do," said Gerty, with her head a little on one side, and a very knowing look

"Well, where is she?"

"An't she in your lap?"

"What, you!—Why, do you think Mrs. Sullivan would spend her time making clothes for you?"

"Well," said Gerty, hanging her head, "I shouldn't *think* she would, but then you *said*——"

"Well, what did I say?"

"Something about new clothes for me."

"So I did," said True, giving her a hug; "and they *are* for you;—two whole suits, and shoes and stockings into the bargain"

Gerty opened her large eyes in amazement, laughed, and clapped her hands. True laughed too; they both seemed very happy.

"Did she buy them, Uncle True? Is she rich?" said Gerty

"Mrs Sullivan?—no, indeed!" said True. "Miss Graham bought 'em, and is going to pay Mrs. Sullivan for making them"

"Who is Miss Graham?"

"She's a lady too good for this world—that's sartain. I'll tell you about her some time; but now it's time you were abed and asleep"

One Sabbath, after Gerty was nearly well, she was so much fatigued with sitting up all day that she went to bed before dark, and for two or three hours slept very soundly. On awakening, she saw that True had company. An old man, much older she thought than True, was sitting on the opposite side of the stove, smoking a pipe His dress, though of ancient fashion, and homely in its materials, was very neat He had sharp features, and Gerty thought, from his looks, it must be easy for him to say sharp things—indeed, rather hard for him to say anything pleasant. She rightly conjectured that he was Mrs Sullivan's father, Mr Cooper; and in the opinion she formed of him from her first observation she did not widely differ from most other people who knew the old church-sexton. But both his own face and public opinion somewhat wronged him His duties in the church were mostly solitary, and, as he was much withdrawn in his old age from intercourse with the world at large, he had become severe toward its follies, and unforgiving towards its crimes. There was much that was good and benevolent in him, however; and True Flint knew it, and loved to draw it out On the evening of which we are speaking they had been talking on several of their usual topics, but when Gerty awoke, she found herself the subject of conversation

"Where," said Mr. Cooper, "did you say you picked her up?"

"At Nan Grant's," said True. "Don't you remember her? She's the same woman whose son you were called up to witness against, at the time the church-windows were broken."

"Ah, yes, I remember the she-bear. I shouldn't sup

be any too gentle to her own child, much less a stranger's; but what are you going to do with the foundling, Flint?"

"Keep her, to be sure, and take care on her."

Cooper laughed rather sarcastically.

"Well, now, I s'pose, neighbour, you think it's rather freakish in me to be adoptin' a child at my time o' life; and p'r'aps it is, but she'd a died that night I tell yer on if I hadn't brought her home with me; and a good many times since if I, with the help o' your darter, hadn't took mighty good care on her. The Lord's been very marciful to me, Mr. Cooper, very marciful! He's raised me up friends in my deep distress. I knew, when I was a little shaver, what a lonesome thing it was to be fatherless and motherless, and when I see this little sufferin' human bein' I felt as if, all friendless as she seemed, she was more particker-lerly the Lord's, and as if I could not sarve him more, and ought not to sarve him less, than to share with her the blessin's he has bestowed on me. I've got my hands yet, and a stout heart and a willin' mind. With God's help I'll be a father to that child, and the time may come when she'll be God's embodied blessin' to me."

Mr. Cooper shook his head doubtfully, and muttered something about children not being apt to prove blessings.

But he had not power to shake Trueman's high faith in the wisdom of his proceedings. He had risen, in the earnestness with which he had spoken, and after pacing the room hastily and with excitement he returned to his seat, and said—"Besides, neighbour Cooper, if I had not made up my mind the night Gerty came here, I wouldn't have sent her away after the next day, for the Lord, I think, spoke to me by the mouth of one of his holy angels, and bade me persevere in my resolution. You've seen Miss Graham? Well may I bless her angel face, poor thing!—if the world is dark to her, she makes it light to other folks. She done me many a kindness since I got hurt so bad in her father's store, and she sent for me that day to ask how I did, and if there was anything I wanted that she could speak to the master about. So I told her all about little Gerty, and she and I both cried afore I'd done. She put some money into my hand, and told me to get Mrs. Sullivan to make some clothes for Gerty, and when I was going away, she said, 'I'm sure you've done quite right, True, the Lord will bless and reward your kindness to that poor child'."

True was so excited and animated by his subject that he did not notice that Gerty had risen from her bed and was standing

beside him, her eyes fixed upon his face, breathless with the interest she felt in his words. She touched his shoulder; he looked round, and stretched out his arms. She sprang into them, buried her face in his bosom, and, bursting into a paroxysm of joyful tears, gasped out the words, "Shall I stay with you always?"

"Yes, just as long as I live," said True, "you shall be my child."

CHAPTER V

FIRST STEPS TO IMPROVEMENT

It was a stormy evening. Gerty was standing at the window, watching for True's return from his lamplighting. She was neatly and comfortably dressed, her hair smooth, her face and hands clean. She was now quite well. Care and kindness had done wonders for her, and though still a pale and rather slender-looking child, with eyes and mouth disproportionately large to her other features, the painful look of suffering she had been wont to wear had given place to a happy though rather grave expression. On the wide window-sill in front of her sat a plump and venerable cat, parent to Gerty's lost darling, and for that reason very dear to her. She was quietly stroking its back, while the constant purring that the old veteran kept up proved her satisfaction at the arrangement.

Gerty turned and glanced round the room with an air of infinite satisfaction; then, clambering upon the wide, old-fashioned window-sill, where she could see up the yard and have a full view of the lamplighter the moment he entered the gate, she took the cat in her arms, smoothed down her dress, gave a look of interest and pride at her shoes and stockings, and then composed herself, with a determined effort to be patient. It would not do, however; it seemed to her that he never came so late before, and she was just beginning to think he never would come at all, when he turned into the gate. Impatient as Gerty had been for True's arrival, she did not run to meet him as usual, but waited in a listening attitude, until she heard him come in through the shed. She then ran and hid behind the door. She evidently had some great surprise in store for him, and meant to enjoy it to the utmost. The cat, not being so full of the matter, whatever it was, was more mindful of her manners, and went

to meet him, rubbing her head against his legs, which was her customary welcome.

"Hullo, whiskers," said True, "where's my little gal?"

He shut the door behind him as he spoke, thus disclosing Gerty to view. She sprang forward with a bound, laughed, and looked first at her own clothes, and then in True's face, to see what he would think of her appearance.

"Well, I declare!" said he, lifting her up in his arms, "little folks do look famous! New gown, apron, shoes! And who fixed your hair? My! you do look famous nice!"

"Mrs. Sullivan dressed me all up, and brushed my hair; and *more too*—don't you see what *else* she has done?"

True followed Gerty's eyes as they wandered around the room. He looked amazed enough to satisfy her anticipations, great as they had been; and no wonder. He had been gone since morning, and things had indeed undergone a transformation.

Until Gerty came to live with True, his home had never been subjected to female intrusion. Living wholly by himself, it had been his habit to make himself comfortable in his own way, utterly regardless of appearances. In his humble apartment sweeping-day came but seldom, and spring-cleaning was unknown. Two large windows, facing the yard, were treated with great injustice, the cheerful light they were capable of affording being half obscured by dirt and smoke. The corners of the ceiling were festooned with cobwebs; the high broad mantel-piece had accumulated a curious medley of things useful and useless. Then the furniture, some of which was very good, was adjusted in the most inconvenient manner, and in a way to turn the size of the room to the least possible advantage.

Now Mrs. Sullivan was the soul of neatness. Her dress was almost Quaker-like in its extreme simplicity, and freedom from the least speck or stain. It was to nurse Gerty, and take care of her in True's absence, that she first entered a room so much the reverse of her own, and it is not easy to appreciate the degree in which the virtue and charity of her so doing was enhanced, unless one can realize how painful the contrast was to her, and how excessively annoying she found it to spend sometimes a whole afternoon in a room which, as she expressed herself afterwards at home, it would have been a real pleasure to her to clear up and put to rights. She really pitied those whose home was such a mass of confusion; felt sure that they could not be happy, and inwardly determined, as soon as Gerty got well, to exert herself in the cause of cleanliness and order, which was, in her eyes, the cause of virtue and happiness.

She pondered how she could broach the subject of a renovation in his affairs to True without wounding his feelings; for she was herself so sensitive on a point of neatness, that she imagined he must be somewhat the same,—and the little woman, being tender-hearted, would not have mortified him for the world —when a mode of action was suggested to her by Gerty herself

On the day previous to that on which the cleaning operations took place, Gerty was observed by Mrs Sullivan standing in the passage near her door, and looking shyly but wistfully in

"Come in, Gerty," said the kind little woman. "Here," added she, seeing how timid the child felt about intruding; "you may sit up here by the table, and see me iron. This is your own little dress. You'll be glad of some new clothes, sha'n't you?"

"Very glad, marm," said Gerty. "Am I to take them away, and keep them all myself?"

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs Sullivan.

"I don't know where I'll put 'em all; there an't no place in our room," said Gerty, glancing with admiration at the open drawer in which Mrs Sullivan was now placing the little dress.

"Why, part of them, you know, you'll be wearing," said Mrs. Sullivan; "and we must find some good place for the rest."

"You've got good places for things," said Gerty, looking round the room, "this is a beautiful room, isn't it?"

"Why, it isn't very different from Mr. Flint's. It's just about the same size, and two front windows like his"

"O, but then yours don't look one bit like ours You haven't got any bed here, and all the chairs stand in a row, and the table shines, and the floor is so clean, and the stove is new, and the sun comes in so bright! O, I wish our room was like this! I shouldn't think ours was more than half as big, either Uncle True stumbled over the tongs this morning, and he said there wasn't room to swing a cat"

"Where were the tongs?" said Mrs. Sullivan

"In the middle of the floor, marm"

"Well, you see I don't keep things in the middle of the floor I think if your room were all cleaned up, and places found for everything, it would look almost as well as mine"

"I wish it could be made as nice," said Gerty; "but what could be done with those beds?"

"I've been thinking about that. There's that little pantry, —or bathing-room; that's large enough to hold a small bedstead

and a chair or two; 'twould be quite a comfortable little chamber for you There's nothing in it but rubbish, that might just as well be thrown away."

"O, that'll be nice!" said Gerty; "then Uncle True can have his bed back again, and I'll sleep on the floor in there"

"No," said Mrs. Sullivan, "it won't be necessary for you to sleep on the floor. I've got a very good little bedstead that my Willie slept on when he lived at home; and I will lend it to you, if you'll take good care of it."

"O, I will," said Gerty. "But can I?" added she, hesitatingly; "do you think I can? I don't know how to do anything."

"You never have been taught to do anything, my child; but a girl eight years old can do a great many things if she is patient and tries hard to learn. I could teach you to do a great deal that would be useful, and that would help your Uncle True very much"

"What could I do?"

"You could sweep the room up every day; you could make the beds, after a fashion, with a little help in turning them, you could set the table, toast the bread, and wash the dishes"

"Oh, I wish I could do something for Uncle True!" said Gerty; "but how could I ever begin?"

"In the first place, you must have things cleaned up for you If I thought Mr. Flint would like it, I'd get Kate McCarty to come in some day and help us, and I think we could make a great improvement in his home"

"O, I know he'd like it," said Gerty. "May I help?"

"Yes, you may do what you can, but Kate'll be the best hand; she's strong, and knows how to do cleaning very well."

"Who's she," said Gerty.

"Kate?—She's Mrs McCarty's daughter, in the next house Mr Flint does them many a good turn—saws wood, and so on They do most of his washing; but they can't half pay him all the kindness he's done that family. Kate's a clever girl, she'll be glad to come and work for him any day. I'll ask her"

"Will she come to-morrow?"

"Perhaps she will"

"Uncle True's going to be gone all day to-morrow," said Gerty. "Wouldn't it be a good time?"

"Very," said Mrs Sullivan. "I'll try and get Kate to come"

Kate came The room was thoroughly cleaned, and put in complete order. Gerty's new clothes were delivered over to

her own keeping; she was neatly dressed in one suit, the other placed in a little chest which was found in the pantry.

It was the result of all Mis Sullivan's, Kate's, and Gerty's combined labour which called forth True's astonishment on his return from his work; and the pleasure he manifested made the day a memorable one in Gerty's life, one to be marked in her memory as long as she lived, as being the first in which she had known *that* happiness of feeling that she had been instrumental in giving joy to another.

None but a loving heart, like Mrs Sullivan's, would have understood and sympathized in the feeling which made Gerty so eager to help But *she* did, and allotted to her many little services, which the child felt herself more blessed in being permitted to perform, than she would have done at almost any gift or favour that could have been bestowed upon her.

She led True about to show him how judiciously and ingeniously Mrs Sullivan had contrived to make the most of the room and the furniture; how, by moving the bed into a deep recess, which was just wide enough for it, she had reserved the whole square area, and made, as True declared, a parlour of it

But his astonishment, and Gerty's delight, reached their climax when she introduced him into the former lumber-closet, now transformed into a really snug and comfortable bedroom

"Well, I declare!" was all the old man could seem to say He sat down beside the stove, rubbed his hands together, took a general view of his reformed domicile, and of Gerty, who, according to Mrs. Sullivan's careful instructions, was preparing to set the table, and toast the bread for supper. True watched her motions for a minute or two, and then indulged in a short soliloquy "Mrs Sullivan's a clever woman, sartain, and they've made my old house here complete, and Gerty's getting to be like the apple of my eye, and I'm as happy a man as——"

CHAPTER VI

WHERE IS HEAVEN?

Here True was interrupted Quick, noisy footsteps in the passage were followed by a sudden and unceremonious opening of the door

"Here, Uncle True," said the new-comer, "here's your package.

You forgot all about it, I guess; and I forgot it too, till mother saw it on the table, where I'd laid it down. I was so taken up with just coming home, you know."

"Of course!" said True "Much obleeged to you, Willie, for fetchin' it for me. It's pretty brittle stuff it's made of, and most like I should have smashed it 'fore I got it home."

"What is it?—I've been wondering"

"Why, it's a little knick-knack I've brought home for Gerty, here, that——"

"Willie!" called Mrs. Sullivan from the opposite room, "have you been to tea, dear?"

"No, indeed, mother; have you?"

"Why, yes; but I'll get you some."

"No, no," said True; "stay and take tea with us, Willie My little Gerty is makin' some famous toast, and I'll have the tea presently."

"So I will," said Willie. "No matter about any supper for me, mother; I'm going to have my tea here, with Uncle True Come, now, let's see what's in the bundle; but first, I want to see little Gerty, mother's been telling me about her. Where is she?"

"Here, Gerty, look here!" said True "Why, where is she?"

"There she is, hiding behind the settle," said Willie, laughing. "She an't afraid of me, is she?"

"Well, I didn't know she was shy," said True. "You silly little girl," added he, going towards her, "come out here and see Willie This is Willie Sullivan."

"I don't want to see him," said Gerty

"Don't want to see Willie!" said True; "why, you don't know what you're sayin'. Willie's the best boy that ever was; I 'spect you and he'll be great friends by and by."

"He won't like me," said Gerty; "I know he won't!"

"Why sha'n't I like you?" said Willie, approaching the corner where Gerty had hid herself Her face was covered with her hands, according to her usual fashion when anything distressed her "I guess I shall like you first-rate, when I see you."

He stooped down as he spoke, for he was much taller than Gerty, and, taking her hands directly down from her face and holding them tight in his own, he fixed his eyes full upon her, and nodding pleasantly, said—

"How do do, Cousin Gerty—how do do?"

"I an't your cousin!" said Gerty.

"Yes you are," said Willie, decidedly; "Uncle True's your uncle, and mine too!—so we're cousins, don't you see?—and I want to get acquainted."

Gerty could not resist Willie's good-natured words and manner She suffered him to draw her out of the corner, and towards the lighter end of the room. As she came near the lamp, she tried to free her hands, in order to cover her face up again, but Willie would not let her, and, attracting her attention to the unopened package, and exciting her curiosity as to what it might contain, he succeeded in diverting her thoughts from herself, so that in a few minutes she seemed quite at her ease.

"There, Uncle True says it's for you," said Willie; "and I can't think what 'tis, can you? Feel—it's hard as can be"

Gerty felt, and looked up wonderingly in True's face.

"Undo it, Willie," said True

Willie produced a knife, cut the string, took off the paper and disclosed one of those white plaster images so familiar to everyone, representing the little Samuel in an attitude of devotion.

"O, how pretty!" exclaimed Gerty, full of delight

"Why didn't I think?" said Willie, "I might have known what 'twas, by the feeling."

"Why! did you ever see it before?" said Gerty.

"Not this same one, but I've seen lots just like it"

"Have you?" said Gerty "I never did. I think it's the beautifullest thing that ever was. Uncle True, did you say it was for me? Where did you get it?"

"It was by an accident I got it A few minutes before I met you, Willie, I was stoppin' at the corner to light my lamp, when I saw one of those *furren* boys with a sight o' these sort of things, and some black ones too, all set up on a board, and he was walkin' with 'em atop of his head. I was just a-wonderin' how he kept 'em there, when he hit the board ag'in my lamp-post, and the first thing I knew, whack they all went! he'd spilt them every one. Lucky enough for him, there was a great bank of soft snow close to the side-walk, and the most of 'em fell into that and wasn't hurt. Some few went on to the bricks, and were smashed Well, I kind o' pitied the feller; for it was late, and I thought like enough he hadn't had much luck sellin' of 'em, to have so many left on his hands——"

"And I know what you did, Uncle True, just as well as if I'd seen you," said Willie, "you set your ladder and torch down, and went to work helping him pick 'em all up—that's just what you'd be sure to do for anybody."

"This feller, Willie, made return right off. When they were all set right, he bowed and scraped, and touched his hat to me, as if I'd been the biggest gentleman in the land; talkin', too, he was, all the time, though I couldn't make out a word of his lingo; and

then he insisted on my takin' one o' the figurs. I wa'n't agoin' to take it, for I didn't want it; but I happened to think little Gerty might like it."

"O, I shall like it!" said Gerty. "I shall like it better than—no, not better, but almost *as well* as my kitten. O, an't he a cunning little boy?"

True, finding that Gerty was wholly taken up with the image, walked away and began to get the tea, leaving the two children to entertain each other.

"You must take care and not break it, Gerty," said Willie. "We had a Samuel once, just like it, in the shop; and I dropped it, and broke it into a million pieces"

"What did you call it?" said Gerty.

"A Samuel, they're all Samuels"

"What are *Sammles*?" said Gerty.

"Why, that's the name of the child they're taken for?"

"What do you s'pose he's sittin' on his knee for?'

Willie laughed. "Why, don't you know?" said he.

"No," said Gerty; "what is he?"

"He's praying," said Willie

"Is that what he's got his eyes turned up for, too?"

"Yes, of course; he looks up to heaven when he prays."

"Up to where?"

"To heaven"

Gerty looked up at the ceiling in the direction in which the eyes were turned, then at the figure. She seemed very much puzzled.

"Why, Gerty," said Willie, "I shouldn't think you knew what praying was"

"I don't," said Gerty, "tell me"

"Don't you ever pray—pray to God?"

"No, *I* don't.—Who is God? Where is God?"

Willie looked inexpressibly shocked at Gerty's ignorance, and answered reverently, "God is in heaven, Gerty"

"I don't know where that is," said Gerty. "I believe I don't know nothin' about it"

"I shouldn't think you did," said Willie "I *believe* heaven is up in the sky; but my Sunday-school teacher says, 'heaven is anywhere where goodness is', or some such thing"

"Are the stars in heaven?" said Gerty

"They look so, don't they?" said Willie "They're in the sky, where I always used to think heaven was"

"I should like to go to heaven," said Gerty.

"Perhaps, if you're good, you will go some time."

"Can't any but good folks go?"

"No"

"Then I can't ever go," said Gerty, mournfully.

"Why not?" said Willie; "an't you good?"

"O no! I'm very bad"

"What a queer child!" said Willie. "What makes you think yourself so very bad?"

"O, I *am*," said Gerty, in a very sad tone, "I'm the worst of all. I'm the worst child in the world"

"Who told you so?"

"Everybody. Nan Grant says so, and I know it too myself."

"Is Nan Grant the cross woman you used to live with?"

"Yes How did you know she was cross?"

"O, my mother's been telling me about her. Didn't she send you to school, or teach you anything?"

Gerty shook her head

"Why, what lots you've got to learn! What did you use to do when you lived there?"

"Nothing"

"Never did anything, and don't know anything; my gracious!"

"Yes, I do know one thing," said Gerty. "I know how to toast bread—your mother taught me."

As she spoke, she thought of her own neglected toast, and turned towards the stove; but the toast was made, the supper ready, and True was just putting it on the table

"O, Uncle True," said she, "I meant to get the tea"

"I know it," said True, "but it's no matter, you can get it to-morrow"

The tears came into Gerty's eyes—she looked very much disappointed, but said nothing They all sat down to supper. Willie put the Samuel in the middle of the table for a centre ornament, and told so many funny stories, and said so many pleasant things, that Gerty laughed heartily, and showed herself for once a merry child After tea she sat beside Willie on the great settle, and gave him a description of her life at Nan Grant's, winding up with a touching account of the death of her kitten.

The two children seemed in a fair way to become as good friends as True could possibly wish. True himself sat on the opposite side of the stove, smoking his pipe, his elbows on his knees, his eyes bent on the children, and his ears drinking in all their conversation. He laughed when they laughed, seemed soberly satisfied, and took long whiffs at his pipe, when they talked quietly and sedately, ceased smoking entirely, letting his pipe rest on his knee, and secretly wiping away a tear, when Gerty recounted her childish griefs.

After Gerty had closed her tale of sorrows, which was frequently interrupted by Willie's ejaculations of condolence or pity, she sat for a moment without speaking, then, becoming excited, as her ungoverned and easily roused nature dwelt upon its wrongs, she burst forth in a very different tone from that in which she had been speaking, and commenced uttering the most bitter invectives against Nan Grant, making use of many a rough and coarse term, such as she had been accustomed to hear used by the ill-bred people with whom she had lived. True looked worried and troubled at hearing her talk so angrily. Gerty had shown herself so mild and patient since she had been with him, so submissive to his wishes, so anxious even to forestall them, that it had never occurred to him to dread any difficulty in the management of the child. Now, however, as he observed her flashing eyes, and noticed the doubling of her little fist as she menaced Nan with her future wrath, he had an undefined presentiment of coming trouble in the control of his little charge; a feeling almost of alarm, lest he had undertaken what he could never perform.

For the moment she ceased, in his eyes, to be the pet and plaything he had hitherto considered her. He saw in her something which needed a check, and felt himself unfit to apply it

And no wonder. He *was* totally unfit to cope with a spirit like Gerty's. It was true he possessed over her one mighty influence —her strong affection for him, which he could not doubt. It was that which made her so submissive and patient in her sickness, so grateful for his care and kindness, so anxious to do something in return. It was that deep love for her first friend, which, never wavering, and growing stronger to the last, proved in after years a noble motive for exertion, a worthy incentive to virtue It was that love, fortified and illumined by a higher light, which came in time to sanctify it, that gave her, while yet a mere girl, a woman's courage, a woman's strength of heart and self-denial

But for the present it was not enough. The kindness she had received for the few weeks past had completely softened Gerty's heart towards her benefactors, but the effect of eight years mismanagement, ill-treatment, and want of all judicious discipline, could not be done away with in that short time. The plant that for years has been growing distorted, and dwelling in a barren spot, deprived of light and nourishment, withered in its leaves and blighted in its fruit, cannot at once recover from so cruel a blast Transplanted to another soil, it must be directed in the right course, nourished with care and warmed with Heaven's light ere it can recover from the shock occasioned



M 20

EMILY AND GERTRUDE IN THE CHURCH

by its early neglect, and find strength to expand its flowers and ripen its fruit.

So with little Gerty:—a new direction must be given to her ideas, new nourishment to her mind, new light to her soul, ere the higher purposes for which she was created could be accomplished in her.

Something of this True felt, and it troubled him. He did not, however, attempt to check the child. He did not know what to do, and so did nothing.

After Gerty had railed about Nan a little while, she stopped of her own accord, though an unpleasant look remained on her countenance. It soon passed away, however, and when, a little later in the evening, Mrs. Sullivan appeared at the door, Gerty looked bright and happy, listened with evident delight while True uttered warm expressions of thanks for the labour which had been undertaken in his behalf, and, when Willie went away with his mother, said her good-night, and asked him to come again so pleasantly, and her eyes looked so bright as she stood holding on to True's hand, that Willie said as soon as they were out of hearing, "She's a queer little thing, an't she, mother?"

THE FIRST PRAYER

It would have been hard to find two children, both belonging to the poorer class, whose situations in life had thus far presented a more complete contrast than those of Gerty and Willie. Mrs. Sullivan's husband had been a country clergyman; but as he died when Willie was a baby, leaving very little property for the support of his family, the widow went home to her father, taking her child with her. The old man needed his daughter; for death had made sad inroads in his household since she left it, and he was alone.

From that time the three had lived together in humble comfort; for, though poor, industry and frugality secured them from want. Willie was his mother's pride, her hope, her constant thought. She spared herself no toil or care to provide for his physical comfort, his happiness, and his growth in knowledge and virtue.

It would have been strange enough if she had not been proud

of a boy whose winning disposition, and early evidences of a manly and noble nature, won him friends even among strangers. No one could have been in the boy's company half an hour without loving and admiring him. He had naturally a warm-hearted, affectionate disposition, which his mother's love and the world's smiles had fostered; an unusual flow of animal spirits, tempered by a natural politeness towards his elders and superiors; a quick apprehension; a sincere sympathy in others' pleasures and pains; in fine, one of those genial natures that win hearts one knows not how. He was fond of study, and until his twelfth year his mother kept him constantly at school.

At that age he had an excellent opportunity to enter into the service of an apothecary, who wanted a boy to assist in his shop The wages that Mr Bray offered were not great, but there was the hope of an increased salary; and, at any rate, situated as Willie was, it was not a chance to be overlooked. Fond as he was of his books, he had long been eager to be at work. His mother and grandfather consented to the plan, and he gladly accepted Mr. Bray's proposals

He was sadly missed at home; for, as he slept at his employer's during the week, he rarely had leisure to make even a passing visit to his mother, except on Saturday, when he came home at night, and passed Sunday with her.

A motive Willie had long had His grandfather was old, his mother weak, and both poor. He must be the staff of their old age, he must labour for their support and comfort; he must do *more*,—they hoped great things of him, they *must* not be disappointed He did not, however, while arming himself for future conflict with the world, forget the present, but sat down and learned his Sunday-school lessons After which, according to custom, he read aloud in the Bible, and then Mrs Sullivan, laying her hand on the head of her son, offered up a simple, heart-felt prayer for the boy—one of those mothers' prayers which the child listens to with reverence and love, and remembers in the far-off years—one of those prayers which keep men from temptation, and deliver them from evil

After Willie went home that evening, and Gerty was left alone with True, she sat on a low stool beside him for some time without speaking Her eyes were intently fixed upon the white image which lay in her lap, that her little mind was very busy there could be no doubt, for thought was plainly written on her face True was not often the first to speak; but, finding Gerty unusually quiet, he lifted up her chin, looked enquiringly in her face, and then said—

"Well, Willie's a pretty clever sort of a boy, isn't he?"

Gerty answered "Yes"; without, however, seeming to know what she was saying

"You like him, don't you?" said True.

"Very much," said Gerty, in the same absent way. Then, looking up suddenly, she said—

"Uncle True?"

"What say?"

"What does Samuel pray to God for?"

True stared. "Samuel!—pray!—I guess I don't know exactly what you're saying"

"Why," said Gerty, holding up the image, "Willie says this little boy's name is Samuel; and that he sits on his knee, and puts his hands together *so*, and looks up, because he's praying to God, that lives up in the sky. I don't know what he means—'*way* up in the sky—do you?"

True took the image and looked at it attentively; he moved uneasily upon his chair, scratched his head, and finally said—

"Well, I s'pose he's about right This 'ere child is prayin', sartain, though I didn't think on it afore But I don't just know what he calls it a Samuel for We'll ask him some-time"

"Well, what does he pray for, Uncle True?"

"O, he prays to make him good, it makes folks good to pray to God"

"Can God make folks good?"

"Yes God is very great; he can do anything"

"How can he *hear*?"

"He hears everything and sees everything in the world."

"And does he live in the sky?"

"Yes," said True, "in heaven"

Many more questions Gerty asked, many strange questions, that True could not answer True had a humble, loving heart, and a child-like faith, he had enjoyed but little religious instruction, but he earnestly endeavoured to live up to the light he had. But he had never enquired deeply into the sources of that belief which it had never occurred to him to doubt, and he was not at all prepared for the questions suggested by the inquisitive, keen, and newly excited mind of little Gerty. He answered her as well as he could, however, and, where he was at fault, hesitated not to refer her to Willie, who, he told her, went to Sunday-school, and knew a wonderful sight about such things All the information that Gerty could gain amounted to the knowledge of these facts:—that God was in heaven, that

His power was great; and that people were made better by prayer. Her little eager brain was so intent upon the subject, however, that, as it grew late, the thought even of sleeping in her new room could not efface it from her mind. After she had gone to bed, with the white image hugged close to her bosom, and True had taken away the lamp, she lay for a long time with her eyes wide open. Just at the foot of the bed was the window. Gerty could see out, as she had done before in her garret at Nan Grant's; but, the window being larger, she had a much more extended view. The sky was bright with stars; and the sight of them revived her old wonder and curiosity as to the author of such brilliant and distant lights. Now, however, as she gazed, there darted through her mind the thought, "God lit them! O, how great he must be! But a *child* might pray to him!" She rose from her little bed, approached the window, and, falling on her knees and clasping her hands precisely in the attitude of the little Samuel, she looked up to heaven. She spoke no word, but her eyes glistened with the dew of a tear that stood in each. Was not each tear a prayer? She breathed no petition, but she longed for God and virtue Was not that very wish a prayer? Her little uplifted heart throbbed vehemently. Was not each throb a prayer? And did not God in heaven, without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, hear and accept that first homage of a little untaught child; and did it not call a blessing down?

CHAPTER VIII

TREASURED WRONGS

In the course of the few following weeks, during which her perseverance held out surprisingly, Gerty learned how to make herself useful in many ways, and, as Mrs Sullivan had prophesied, gave promise of becoming one day quite a clever little housekeeper Of course the services she performed were trifling, but her active and willing feet saved True a great many steps, and she was of essential aid in keeping the rooms neat, that being her especial ambition She felt that Mrs Sullivan expected her, now that the dust and cobwebs were all cleared away, to take care that they should not accumulate again. and it was quite an amusing sight

every day, when True had gone out as usual to fill and clean the street-lamps, to see the little girl diligently labouring with an old broom Mrs Sullivan looked in occasionally to praise and assist her, and nothing made Gerty happier than learning how to do some new thing. She met with a few trials and discouragements, to be sure; but as True never thought of blaming her for anything, she forgot her misfortunes, and experience made her careful.

Kate McCarty thought her the smartest child in the world, and would sometimes come in and wash up the floor, or do some other work, which required more strength or skill than Gerty possessed

Prompted by her ambition to equal Mrs. Sullivan's expectations, and still more by her desire to be useful to True, and in some degree manifest her love to him by her labours, Gerty was usually patient, good-natured, and obliging So very indulgent was True, that he rarely indeed laid a command upon the child, leaving her to take her own course, and have her own way; but undisciplined as she was, she willingly yielded obedience to one who never thwarted her, and the old man seldom saw her exhibit in his presence that violent temper which, when roused, knew no restraint

One Sunday Gerty, who had now a nice little hood, which True had bought for her, was returning with Mr. Cooper, Mr. Flint, and Willie, from the afternoon service at church The two old men were engaged in one of their lengthy discussions, and the children having fallen into the rear, had been talking earnestly about the church, the minister, the people, and the music, all of which were new to Gerty, and greatly excited her wonder and astonishment.

As they drew near home, Willie remarked how dark it was growing in the streets, and then, looking down at Gerty, whom he held by the hand, he said, "Gerty, do you ever go out with Uncle True, and see him light the lamps?"

"No, I never did," said Gerty, "since the first night I came. I've wanted, but it's been so cold Uncle True would not let me, he said I'd just catch the fever again."

"It won't be cold this evening," said Willie, "it'll be a beautiful night; and if Uncle True's willing, let you and I go with him. I've often been You can look into the windows and see folks drinking tea, and sitting all round the fire in the parlours."

"And I like to see him light those great lamps," interrupted Gerty, "they make it look so bright and beautiful all round. I hope he'll let us go I'll ask him. Come," said she, pulling

him by the hand, "let's catch up with them and ask him now."

"No—wait," said Willie, "he's busy talking with grandpa, and we're almost home—we can ask him then"

He could hardly restrain her impatience, however; and, as soon as they reached the gate she suddenly broke away from him, and, rushing up to True, made known her request. The plan was willingly acceded to, and the three soon started on the rounds.

For some time Gerty's attention was so wholly engrossed by the lamplighting that she could see and enjoy nothing else. But Willie hurried her along, telling her that they were now in the finest street they should pass through, and that they must make haste, for they had nearly reached the house he most wanted her to see When they came up with True he was just placing his ladder against a post opposite a fine block of buildings. Many of the front windows were shaded, so that the children could not see in, some, however, either had no curtains, or they had not yet been drawn. In one parlour there was a pleasant wood-fire, around which a group were gathered, and here Gerty would fain have lingered. Again, in another, a brilliant chandelier was lit, and though the room was vacant the furniture was so showy, and the whole so brilliant, that the child clapped her hands in delight, and Willie could not prevail upon her to leave the spot until he told her that farther down the street was another house, equally attractive, where she would perhaps see some beautiful children

"How do you know there'll be children there?" said she as they walked along

"I don't know certainly," said Willie, "but I think there will They used always to be up at the window when I came with Uncle True last winter"

"How many?" asked Gerty.

"Three, I believe There was one little girl with such beautiful curls, and such a sweet, cunning little face. She looked like a wax doll, only a great deal prettier."

"O, I hope we shall see her!" said Gerty, dancing along on the tips of her toes, so full was she of excitement and pleasure

"There they are!" exclaimed Willie; "all three, I declare, just as they used to be!"

"Where?" said Gerty, "where?"

"Over opposite, in the great stone house. Here, let's cross over. It's muddy; I'll carry you"

Willie lifted Gerty carefully over the mud, and they stood

in front of the house. True had not yet come up. It was he that the children were watching for. Gerty was not the only child that loved to see the lamps lit

It was now quite dark, so that persons in a light room could not see anyone out of doors, but Willie and Gerty had so much the better chance to look in. It was indeed a fine mansion, evidently the home of wealth. A clear coal-fire, and a bright lamp in the centre of the room, shed abroad their cheerful blaze Rich carpets, deeply tinted curtains, pictures in gilded frames, and huge mirrors, reflecting the whole on every side, gave Gerty her first impressions of luxurious life. There was an air of comfort combined with all this elegance, which made it still more fascinating to the child of poverty and want. A table was bountifully spread for tea, the cloth of snow-white damask, the shining plate, above all, the home-like hissing tea-kettle, had a most inviting look. A gentleman in gay slippers was in an easy-chair by the fire; a lady in a gay cap was superintending a servant-girl's arrangements at the tea-table; and the children of the household, smiling and happy, were crowded together on a window-seat, looking out, as we have said

They were, as Willie had described them, sweet, lovely-looking little creatures, especially a girl, about the same age as Gerty, the eldest of the three Her fair hair fell in long ringlets over a neck as white as snow; she had blue eyes, a cherub face, and a little, round, plump figure Gerty's admiration and rapture were such that she could find no expression for them, except in jumping up and down, shouting, laughing, and directing Willie's notice first to one thing and then another.

"O, Willie, isn't she a darling? and see what a beautiful fire—what a splendid lady! And look! look at the father's shoes! What is that on the table? I guess it's good! There's a big looking-glass; and O, Willie! an't they dear little handsome children?"

In all her exclamations she began and ended with her praises of the children. Willie was quite satisfied, Gerty was as much pleased as he had expected or wished

The next instant the servant-girl came and drew down the window-blinds Gerty then took Willie's hand again, and they hastened on once more to overtake True

"Shouldn't you like to live in such a house as that, Gerty?" said Willie

"Yes, indeed," said Gerty, "an't it splendid?"

"I wish I had just such a house," said Willie "I mean to, one of these days"

"Where will you get it?" exclaimed Gerty, much amazed at so bold a declaration.

"O, I shall work, and grow rich, and buy it."

"You can't; it would take a lot o' money!"

"I know it; but I can earn a lot, and I will, too The gentleman that lives in that grand house was a poor boy when he first came to Boston; and why can't one poor boy get rich as well as another?"

"How do you suppose he got so much money?"

"I don't know how *he* did; there are a good many ways Some people think it's all luck, but I guess it's as much smartness as anything."

"Are you smart?"

Willie laughed. "An't I?" said he "If I don't turn out a rich man, one of these days, you may say I an't"

"I know what I'd do, if I was rich," said Gerty.

"What?" asked Willie.

"First, I'd buy a great, nice chair for Uncle True, with cushions all in the inside, and bright flowers on it,—just exactly like that one the gentleman was sitting in, and next, I'd have great big lamps, ever so many all in a bunch, so as to make the room as *light*—as *light* as it could be!"

"Seems to me you're mighty fond of lights, Gerty," said Willie.

"I be," said the child. "I hate old, dark, black places; I like stars, and sunshine, and fires, and Uncle True's torch——"

"And I like bright eyes!" interrupted Willie, "yours look just like stars, they shine so to-night An't we having a good time?"

"Yes, real"

And so they went on—Gerty jumping and dancing along the side-walk, Willie sharing in her gaiety and joy, and glorying in the responsibility of entertaining and at the same time protecting the wild little creature They talked much of how they would spend that future wealth which, in their buoyant hopefulness, they both fully calculated upon one day possessing, for Gerty had caught Willie's spirit, and she too meant to work and grow rich. Willie told Gerty of the many plans he had for surrounding his mother and grandfather, and even herself and Uncle True, with every comfort and luxury he had ever heard or dreamt of Willie had no selfish schemes· the generous boy suggested nothing for his own gratification, it was for the rest he meant to labour, and in and through them that he looked for his reward. Happy children! What do they want of wealth? What of any-

thing material and tangible more than they now possess? They have what is worth more than riches or fame. They are full of childhood's faith and hope. They are building those same castles that so many thousand children have built before,—that children always will be building, to the end of time. Blessings on that childhood's delusion, if such it be! Undeceive not the little believers, ye wise ones! Check not that God-given hopefulness, which will, perhaps, in its airy flight, lift them in safety over many a rough spot in life's road. It lasts not long at the best, then check it not, for as it dies out the way grows hard.

One source of the light-heartedness that Willie and Gerty experienced undoubtedly lay in the disinterestedness of the emotion which occupied them; for, in the plans they formed, neither seemed actuated by selfish motives. It was a beautiful spirit of grateful love which each manifested—a spirit in a great degree natural to both. In Willie, however, it had been so fostered by pious training, that it partook of the nature of a principle; while in Gerty it was a mere impulse, and, alas! for poor human nature, when swayed by its own passions alone, the poor little girl had other less pleasing impulses; and, if the former needed encouraging and strengthening, so did the latter require to be uprooted and destroyed.

They had reached the last lamp-post in the street, and now turned another corner, but scarcely had they gone a dozen steps before Gerty stopped short, and, positively refusing to proceed any farther, pulled hard at Willie's hand, and tried to induce him to retrace his steps. "What's the matter, Gerty?" said he. "Are you tired?"

"No, O no! but I can't go any farther."

"Why not?"

"O, because—because—" and here Gerty lowered her voice, and, putting her mouth close to Willie's ear, whispered—"there is Nan Grant's, I see the house! I had forgot Uncle True went there, and I can't go—I'm afraid!"

"Oho!" said Willie, drawing himself up with dignity, "I should like to know what you're afraid of when I'm with you? Let her touch you if she dares! And Uncle True, too!"

Very kindly did Willie plead with the child, telling her that Nan would not be likely to see *them*, but that perhaps they should see *her*; and that was just what he wanted,—nothing he should like better. Gerty's fears were easily allayed. It needed but little reasoning to assure her of the perfect safety of her present position, and her fears soon gave place to the desire to point out to Willie her former persecutor. And never had

anyone a fairer chance to be looked at than Nan at that moment. She was standing opposite the window, engaged in an animated dispute with one of her neighbours Her countenance expressed angry excitement, and, an ill-looking woman at best, her face now was so sufficient an index to her character, that no one could see her thus, and afterwards question her right to the title of vixen, virago, scold, or anything else that conveys the same idea

"Which is she?" said Willie, "the tall one, swinging the coffee-pot in her hand?"

"Yes," said Gerty, "that's Nan"

"What's she doing?"

"O, she's fighting with Miss Birch; she does most always with somebody."

"Come, don't let's stop; she's an ugly-looking woman, just as I knew she was"

But Gerty lingered Courageous in the knowledge that she was safe and unseen, she was attentively gazing at Nan, and her eyes glistened. Willie, perceiving that Mr Flint and his torch were far down the street, left Gerty, and started himself, as an expedient to draw her on, saying, at the same time, "Come, Gerty, I can't wait."

Gerty turned, saw that he was going, then, quick as lightning, stooped, and picking up a stone, flung it at the window. There was a crash of broken glass, and an exclamation in Nan's well-known voice, but Gerty was not there to see the result of her work The instant the stone had left her hand, flying past Willie, she paused not until she was safe by the side of True

Willie did not overtake them until they were nearly home, and then came running up, exclaiming, breathlessly, "Why, Gerty, do you know what you did?—You broke the window!"

Gerty pouted, and declared that was what she meant to do

True and Willie were shocked and silent Gerty was silent too for the rest of the walk; there were clouds on her face, and she felt unhappy in her little heart Poor child! how much she needs to learn the truth! God grant that the inward may one day become as dear to her as now the outward light!

CHAPTER IX

A NEW FRIEND

"Father," said Mrs Sullivan one afternoon, as he was preparing to go out and to take with him a number of articles which he wanted for his Saturday's work in the church, "why don't you get little Gerty to go with you and carry some of your things? she'd like to go, I know"

"She'd only be in the way," said Mr. Cooper.

But when he had swung a lantern and an empty coal-hod on one arm, taken a little hatchet and a basket of chips in his hand, and hoisted a small ladder over his shoulder, he was fain to acknowledge that there was no accommodation for his hammer and a large paper of nails

So Mrs Sullivan called Gerty, and asked her to go with Mr. Cooper, and help him to carry his tools

Gerty was pleased with the proposal, and taking the hammer and nails, started off with great alacrity.

When they reached the church, the old sexton took them from her hands, and telling her she could play about until he went home, left her and went down into the vestry-room Gerty was thus left to her own amusement, and ample amusement she found it, for some time, to wander among the empty aisles and pews, and examine closely what, hitherto, she had only viewed from a corner in the gallery. She was just beginning to grow weary, however, when the organist, who had entered unperceived, commenced playing some low, sweet music; and Gerty, seating herself on the pulpit stairs, listened with great attention. He had not played long before the door opened and a couple of visitors entered, in observing whom Gerty was soon wholly engrossed. One was an elderly man, dressed like a clergyman, short and spare, with hair thin and grey, forehead high, and features rather sharp, but, though a plain man, remarkable for his calm and benignant expression of countenance A young lady, apparently about twenty-five years of age, was leaning on his arm. She was attired with great simplicity, wearing a dark-brown cloak, and a bonnet of the same colour, relieved by some light-blue ribbon about the face She was somewhat below the middle size, but had a pleasing and well-rounded figure Her features were small and regular, her complexion clear though rather pale, and her light-brown hair was most neatly and carefully arranged She never lifted her

eyes as she walked slowly up the aisle, and the long lashes nearly swept her cheek.

The two approached the spot where Gerty sat, but without perceiving her. "I am glad you like the organ," said the gentleman. "They say it is a superior instrument, and that Hermann plays it remarkably well"

"My opinion is not of any value," said the lady; "for I have very little knowledge of music, much as I love it But that symphony sounds very delightful to me; it is a long time since I have heard such touching strains; or, it may be, it is partly owing to their striking so sweetly on the solemn quiet of the church this afternoon"

"I thought you would enjoy it, my dear. I knew Hermann would be playing; and when I saw how pale you were looking, it seemed to me the walk would do you good"

"It has done me good The clear cold air was just what I needed; but Mrs Ellis was busy, and I could not, you know, go out alone."

"I thought I should find Mr. Cooper, the sexton, here," said the gentleman "Perhaps he is in the vestry-room; he is always somewhere about here on Saturday· I think I had better go and look for him"

Just then Mr. Cooper entered the church, and, seeing the clergyman, came up, and seemed to request him to accompany him somewhere, for the gentleman hesitated, glanced at the young lady, and then said, "I suppose I ought to go to-day; but I don't know——"

Then, turning to the lady, he said, "Emily, Mr. Cooper wants me to go to Mrs. Glass with him Do you think you would mind waiting here until I return? She lives in the next street, but I may be detained, for it's about that matter of the library books being so mischievously defaced, and I am afraid that oldest boy of hers had something to do with it."

"O, go, by all means," said Emily. "Mr Hermann's playing is a great treat to me, and I don't care how long I wait; so I beg you won't hurry on my account, Mr. Arnold."

Thus assured, Mr. Arnold led the lady to a chair beneath the pulpit, and went away with Mr Cooper

All this time Gerty had been quite unnoticed, and had remained very quiet on the upper stair, a little secured from sight by the pulpit Hardly had the doors closed, however, when the child began to descend the stairs. The moment she moved, the lady, whose seat was very near, started, and exclaimed, "Who's that?"

Gerty stood quite still, and made no reply. Strangely enough,

the lady did not look up, though she must have perceived that the movement was above her head There was a moment's pause, and then Gerty began again to run down the stairs This time the lady sprung up, and, stretching out her hand, said, as before, "Who is it?"

"Me," said Gerty, looking up in the lady's face; "it's only me"

"Will you stop and speak to me?" said the lady

Gerty not only stopped, but came close up to Emily's chair, irresistibly attracted by the music of the sweetest voice she had ever heard. The lady placed her hand on Gerty's head and said, "Who are you?"

"Gerty"

"Gerty who?"

"Nothing else but Gerty."

"Have you forgotten your other name?"

"I haven't got any other name"

"How came you here?"

"I came with Mr. Cooper, to help him bring his things."

"And he's left you here to wait for him, and I'm left too; so we must take care of each other, mustn't we?"

Gerty laughed at this.

"Where were you?—On the stairs?"

"Yes"

"Suppose you sit down on this step by my chair, and talk with me a little while I want to see if we can't find out what your other name is. Where do you say you live?"

"With Uncle True."—"True?"

"Yes. Mr. True Flint, I live with now He took me home to his house one night, when Nan Grant put me out on the sidewalk"

"Are you that little girl? Then I've heard of you before Mr. Flint told me all about you"

"Do you know my Uncle True?"

"Yes, very well"

"What's your name?"

"My name is Emily Graham."

"O! I know," said Gerty, springing up and clapping her hands; "I know. You asked him to keep me—I *heard* him say so; and you gave me my clothes, and you're beautiful; and you're good; and I love you! O! I love you ever so much!"

As Gerty spoke with a voice full of excitement, a strange look passed over Miss Graham's face, a most enquiring and restless look, as if the tones of the voice had vibrated on a chord of

her memory. She did not speak, but, passing her arm round the child's waist, drew her closer to her. As the peculiar expression passed away from her face, and her features assumed their usual calm composure, Gerty, as she gazed at her with a look of wonder, exclaimed at last, "Are you going to sleep?"

"No —Why?"

"Because your eyes are shut."

"They are always shut, my child."

"Always shut!—What for?"

"I am blind, Gerty, I can see nothing"

"Not see!" said Gerty. "Can't you see anything? Can't you see me now?"

"No," said Miss Graham

"O!" exclaimed Gerty, drawing a long breath, "*I'm so glad*"

"*Glad?*" said Miss Graham, in a sad voice.

"O yes!" said Gerty; "so glad you can't see me!—because, now, perhaps, you'll love me"

"And shouldn't I love you if I saw you?" said Emily, passing her hand softly and slowly over the child's features

"O no!" answered Gerty, "I'm so ugly! I'm glad you can't see how ugly I am"

"But just think, Gerty," said Emily, in the same sad voice, "how would you feel if you could not see the light, could not see anything in the world?"

"Can't you see the sun, and the stars, and the sky, and the church we're in? Are you in the dark?"

"In the dark all the time; day and night in the dark."

Gerty burst into a paroxysm of tears. "O!" exclaimed she, as soon as she could find voice amid her sobs, "it's too bad!"

The child's grief was contagious; and, for the first time for years, Emily wept bitterly for her blindness

It was for but a few moments, however. Quickly recovering herself, she tried to compose the child also, saying, "Hush! hush! don't cry; and don't say it's too bad! I'm used to it, and am quite happy."

"*I* shouldn't be happy in the dark; I should *hate* to be!" said Gerty. "I *an't* glad you're blind, I'm really *sorry*. I wish you could see me and everything. Can't your eyes be opened any way?"

"No," said Emily, "never, but we won't talk about that any more. I want to know what makes you think yourself so very ugly"

"Because folks say that I am an ugly child, and that nobody loves ugly children"

"Yes, people do," said Emily, "love ugly children, if they are good."

"But I an't good," said Gerty. "I'm really bad!"

"But you *can be good*," said Emily, "and then everybody will love you."

"Do you think I can be good?"

"Yes, if you try."

"I will try."

"I *hope* you will," said Emily "Mr. Flint thinks a great deal of his little girl, and she must do all she can to please him"

She then went on to make enquiries concerning Gerty's former way of life, and became so much interested in the recital of the little girl's early sorrows that she was unconscious of the flight of time

Gerty was very communicative Always a little shy of strangers at first, she was nevertheless easily won by kind words; and, in the present case, the sweet voice and sympathetic tones of Emily went straight to her heart The two were still entertaining each other, and, as we have said, unconscious of the lateness of the hour, when Mr. Arnold entered the church hastily, and somewhat out of breath. As he came up the aisle, when he was yet some way off, he called to Emily, saying, "Emily, dear, I'm afraid you thought I had forgotten you I have been gone so much longer than I intended"

"Have you been gone long?" replied Emily "I have had company, you see"

"What, little folks!" said Mr Arnold, good-naturedly "Where did this little body come from?"

"She came to the church this afternoon with Mr. Cooper. Isn't he here for her?"

"Cooper?—No· he went straight home after he left me What's to be done?"

"Can't we take her home? Is it far?"

"It is two or three streets from here, and directly out of our way; altogether too far for you to walk"

"O, no, it won't tire me, and I should like to know she was safe home"

If Emily could but have seen Gerty's grateful face that moment she would indeed have felt repaid for almost any amount of weariness

So they went home with Gerty, and Emily kissed her at the gate. and Gerty was a happy child that night

CHAPTER X

MENTAL DARKNESS

As may be supposed, the blind girl did not forget our little Gerty. The tones of the child's voice, the earnestness and pathos with which she spoke, the confiding and affectionate manner in which she had clung to her, the sudden clasping of her hand, and, finally, her vehement outbreak of grief when she became conscious of Emily's great misfortune—all these things so haunted Miss Graham's recollection, that she dreamt of the child at night, and thought much of her by day. She could not account to herself for the interest she felt in the little stranger; but the impulse to see and know more of her was irresistible, and sending for True she talked a long time with him about the child.

True was highly gratified by Miss Graham's account of the meeting in the church, and of the interest the little girl had inspired in one for whom he felt the greatest admiration and respect Gerty had previously told him how she had seen Miss Graham, and had spoken in the most glowing terms of the dear lady who was so kind to her, and brought her home when Mr. Cooper had forgotten her, but it had not occurred to the old man that the fancy was mutual.

Emily asked him if he didn't intend to send her to school.

"Well, I don't know," said he, "she's a little thing, and an't much used to being with other children. Besides, I don't exactly like to spare her."

Emily suggested that it was time she was learning to read and write, and that the sooner she went among other children the easier it would be to her.

"Very true, Miss Emily," said Flint "I daresay you're right, and if you think she'd better go, I'll ask her, and see what she says"

"I would," said Emily. "I think she might enjoy it, besides improving her very much; and, about her clothes, if there's any deficiency, I'll——"

"O, no, no, Miss Emily!" interrupted True, "there's no necessity, she's very well on't now, thanks to your kindness"

"Well," said Emily, "if she should have any wants, you must apply to me You know we adopted her jointly, and I agreed to do anything I could for her; so you must never hesitate.

I shall delight in doing anything for Gerty. I should like to have her come and see me some day, if she would like, and you'll let her?"

"Sartain," said True; "she'd be glad to come."

A few days after, Gerty went with True to see Miss Graham, but the housekeeper, whom they met in the hall, told them that she was ill, and could see no one. So they went away full of disappointment and regret.

It proved afterwards that Emily took a severe cold the day she sat so long in the church, and was suffering with it when they called, but, though confined to her room, she would have been glad to have a visit from Gerty, and was grieved that Mrs Ellis should have sent them away so abruptly.

On Saturday evening, when Willie was present, True broached the subject of Gerty's going to school. Gerty herself was very much displeased with the idea, but it met with Willie's warm approbation, and when Gerty learned that Miss Graham also wished it, she consented, though rather reluctantly, to begin the next week, and try how she liked it. So, on the following Monday, Gerty accompanied True to one of the primary schools, was admitted, and her education commenced When Willie came home the next Sunday, he rushed into True's room, full of eagerness to hear how Gerty liked going to school. He found her seated at the table with her spelling-book; and as soon as he entered, she exclaimed—"O, Willie! Willie! come and hear me read!"

Her performance could not properly be called reading. She had not got beyond the alphabet, and a few syllables which she had learnt to spell; but Willie bestowed upon her much well-merited praise, for she had really been very diligent. He was astonished to hear that Gerty liked going to school, liked the teacher and the scholars, and had a fine time at recess. He had fully expected that she would dislike the whole business, and very probably go into tantrums about it On the contrary, everything, thus far, had gone well, and Gerty had never looked so animated and happy as she did this evening.

For two or three weeks all appeared to go on smoothly But one day when the children were assembled in the school-yard during recess, Gerty caught sight of True in his working dress, just passing down the street, with his ladder and lamp-filler. Shouting and laughing, she bounded out of the yard, pursued and overtook him She came [illegible] a few minutes, seeming much delighted at the unexpec[illegible] and ran into the yard out of breath, and full of [illegible]. A troop of large girls,

whom Gerty had already had some reason to distrust, had been observing her, and as soon as she returned, one of them called out—

"Who's that man?"

"That's my Uncle True," said Gerty.

"Your what?"

"My uncle, Mr. Flint, that I live with."

"So you belong to him, do you?" said the girl, in an insolent tone of voice. "Ha! ha! ha!"

"What are you laughing at?" said Gerty fiercely.

"Ugh! Before I would live with him!" said the girl, "Old Smutty!"

The others caught it up, and the laugh and epithet "Old Smutty" circulated freely in the corner of the yard where Gerty was standing.

Gerty was furious. Her eyes glistened, she doubled her little fist, and, without hesitation, came down in battle upon the crowd. But they were too many for her, and, helpless as she was with passion, they drove her out of the yard. She started for home on a full run, screaming with all her might.

As she flew along the side-walk, she brushed roughly against a tall and rather stiff-looking lady, who was walking slowly in the same direction, with another and a much smaller person leaning on her arm.

"Bless me!" said the tall lady, who had almost lost her equilibrium from her fright and the suddenness of the shock. "Why, you horrid little creature!" As she spoke, she grasped Gerty by the shoulder, and, before the child could break away, succeeded in giving her a slight shake. This served to increase Gerty's anger, and, her speed gaining in proportion, it was but a few minutes before she was at home, crouched in a corner of True's room behind the bed, her face to the wall, and, as usual on such occasions, covered with both her hands. Here she was free to cry as loud as she pleased.

But she had not had time to indulge long in her tantrum, when the gate at the end of the yard closed with a bang, and footsteps were heard coming towards Mr. Flint's door. Gerty's attention was arrested, for she knew by the sound that it was the step of a stranger who was approaching. With a strong effort she succeeded, after one or two convulsive sobs, in so far controlling herself as to keep quiet. There was a knock at the door, but Gerty did not reply to it, remaining in her position concealed behind the bed. The knock was not repeated, but the stranger lifted the latch and walked in.

"There doesn't seem to be anyone at home," said a female voice, "what a pity!"

"Isn't there? I'm sorry," replied another, in the sweet musical tones of Miss Graham

"I thought you'd better not come here yourself," rejoined the first speaker, who was no other than Mrs Ellis, the lady whom Gerty had so disconcerted.

"O, I don't regret coming," said Emily. "You can leave me here while you go to your sister's, and very likely Mr. Flint or the little girl will come home in the meantime"

"It don't become you, Miss Emily, to be carried round everywhere, and left till called for. You caught a horrid cold, that you're hardly well of it now, waiting there in the church for the minister"

"But, Mrs Ellis, it's very comfortable here Come, put me in Mr Flint's arm-chair, and I can make myself quite contented"

"Well, at any rate," said Mrs Ellis, "I'll make up a good fire in this stove before I go"

As she spoke, the energetic housekeeper seized the poker, and, after stirring up the coals, and making free with True's kindling-wood, waited long enough to hear the roaring and see the blaze, and then went away. As soon as Gerty knew, by the swinging of the gate, that Mrs Ellis had really departed, she suspended her effort at self-control, and, with a deep-drawn sigh, gasped out, "O dear! O dear!"

"Why, Gerty!" exclaimed Emily, "is that you?"

"Yes," sobbed Gerty

"Come here"

The child waited no second bidding, but starting up, ran and buried her face in the blind girl's lap, and once more commenced crying aloud By this time her whole frame was trembling with agitation

"Why, Gerty!" said Emily, "what is the matter?"

But Gerty could not reply; and Emily, finding this to be the case, desisted from her enquiries until the little one should be somewhat composed She lifted Gerty up into her lap, laid her head upon her shoulder, and with her own handkerchief wiped the tears from her face

Her soothing words and caresses soon quieted the child; and when she was calm, Emily, instead of recurring at once to the cause of her grief, questioned her upon other topics At last, however, she asked her if she went to school

"I *have been*," said Gerty, raising her head from Emily's shoulder, "but I won't ever go again!"

"What!—Why not?"

"Because," said Gerty, "I hate those girls; yes, I hate 'em!"

"Gerty," said Emily, "don't say that: you shouldn't hate anybody"

"Why shouldn't I?" said Gerty.

"Because it's wrong."

"No, it's not *wrong*; *I* say it *isn't*!" said Gerty; "and I do hate 'em; and I hate Nan Grant! Don't *you* hate anybody?"

"No," answered Emily, "*I don't*"

"Did anybody ever drown your kitten? Did anybody ever call your father 'Old Smutty'?" said Gerty. "If they had, I know you'd hate 'em, as I do"

"Gerty," said Emily, "didn't you tell me, the other day, that you were a naughty child, but that you wished to be good, and would try?"

"Yes," said Gerty.

"If you wish to become good and be forgiven, you must forgive others"

Gerty said nothing.

"Do you not wish God to forgive and love you?"

"God, that lives in heaven—that made the stars?' said Gerty.

"Yes"

"Will He love me, and let me sometime go to heaven?"

"Yes, if you try to be good, and love everybody."

"Miss Emily," said Gerty, after a moment's pause, "I can't do it, so I s'pose I can't go."

Just at this moment a tear fell upon Gerty's forehead. She looked thoughtfully up in Emily's face, then said—

"Dear Miss Emily, are you going there?"

"I am trying"

"I should like to go with you," said Gerty, shaking her head, meditatively.

Still Emily did not speak. She left the child to the working of her own thoughts

"Miss Emily," said Gerty, at last, in the lowest whisper, "I mean to *try*, but I don't think I *can*"

"God bless you, and help you, my child!" said Emily, laying her hand upon Gerty's head

For fifteen minutes, or more, not a word was spoken by either Gerty lay perfectly still in Emily's lap By and by the latter perceived, by the child's breathing, that, worn out by the fever and excitement of all she had gone through, she had dropped into a quiet sleep. When Mrs Ellis returned, Emily pointed to the sleeping child, and asked her to place her on the bed. She did so,

wonderingly; and then, turning to Emily, exclaimed, "Upon my word, Miss Emily, that's the same rude, bawling little creature, that came so near being the death of us!" Emily smiled at the idea of a child eight years old annihilating a woman of Mrs. Ellis's inches, but said nothing.

Why did Emily weep long that night, as she recalled the scene of the morning? Why did she so beseechingly ask of God His blessing on the little child? Because she had felt, in many a year of darkness and bereavement, in many an hour of fearful struggle, in many a pang of despair, how a temper like that which Gerty had this day shown might, in one moment of its fearful reign, cast a blight upon a lifetime, and write in fearful lines the mournful requiem of early joy

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CHAPTER XI

AN EARTHLY MESSENGER OF PEACE

The next Sabbath afternoon found Gerty seated on a stool in front of a pleasant little wood-fire in Emily's own room Her large eyes were fixed upon Emily's face, which always seemed, in some unaccountable way, to fascinate the little girl, so attentively did she watch the play of the features in a countenance, the charm of which many an older person than Gerty had felt, but tried in vain to describe.

She was certainly a strange child All untaught as she was, she had felt Emily's entire superiority to any being she had ever seen before, and, yielding to that belief in her belonging to an order above humanity, she reposed implicit confidence in what she told her, allowed herself to be guided and influenced by one who she felt loved her, and sought only her good; and, as she sat at her feet, and listened to her gentle voice while she gave her her first lesson upon the distinction between right and wrong, Emily, though she could not see the little thoughtful face that was looking up at her, knew, by the earnest attention she had gained, by the child's perfect stillness, and, still more, by the little hand which had sought hers, and now held it tight, that one great point was won

Gerty had not been to school since the day of her battle with the great girls. All True's persuasions had failed, and she would not go. But Emily understood the child's nature so much better

than True did, and urged upon her so much more forcible motives than the old man had thought of employing, that *she* succeeded where *he* had failed, and finally obtained Gerty's promise that she would go to school the next morning. She also advised her how to conduct herself towards the scholars whom she so much disliked, and gave her some simple directions with regard to her behaviour the next day; telling her that, perhaps, Mr. Flint would go with her, make suitable apologies to the teacher for her absence, and that, in such case, she would have no further trouble.

The next morning True, much pleased that Gerty's repugnance to the school was at last overcome, went with her, and, enquiring for the teacher at the door, stated the case to her in his blunt, honest way, and then left Gerty in her special charge.

Miss Browne, who was a young woman of good sense and good feelings, saw the matter in the right light; and taking an opportunity to speak privately to the girls who had excited Gerty's temper by their rudeness, made them so ashamed of their conduct, that they no longer molested the child; and Gerty got into no more such difficulties

The winter passed away, and the pleasant, sunny spring days came. She had been to school steadily all the winter, and had improved as rapidly as most intelligent children do who are first given the opportunity to learn at an age when, full of ambition, the mind is most fertile and capable of progress She was bright and happy, and tripped round the house so joyously and lightly, that True declared his birdie knew not what it was to touch her heel to the ground, but flew about on the tips of her toes.

The old man could not have loved the little adopted one better had she been his own child, and as he sat by her side on the wide settle, which, when the warm weather came, was moved outside the door, and listened patiently and attentively while she read to him story after story, they seemed, as indeed they were, most suitable companions for each other.

Gerty's life was now as happy and prosperous as it had once been wretched and miserable Six months before she had felt herself all alone, unloved, uncared for Now she had many friends, and knew what it was to be thought of, provided for, and caressed All the days in the week were joyous, but Saturday and Sunday were marked days with her, as well as with Mrs Sullivan, for Saturday brought Willie home to hear her recite her lessons, walk, laugh, and play with her.

Sunday afternoons Gerty spent with Emily, in Emily's own room, listening to her sweet voice, and half-unconsciously im-

bibing a portion of her sweet spirit Emily preached no sermons, nor did she weary the child with exhortations and precepts But long after—when goodness had grown strong within her, and her first feeble resistance of evil, her first attempts to keep her childish resolves, had matured into deeply rooted principles and confirmed habits of right—she felt, as she looked back into the past, that on those blessed Sabbaths, sitting at Emily's knee, she received into her heart the first beams of that immortal light that never could be quenched.

Thus her silent prayer was answered. God had chosen an earthly messenger to lead His child into everlasting peace; a messenger from whose closed eyes the world's paths were all shut out, but who had been so long treading the heavenly road that it was now familiar ground

It was a grievous trial to Gerty, about this time, to learn that the Grahams were soon going into the country for the summer But Emily promised Gerty that she should come and pass a day with her when the weather was fine; a visit which Gerty enjoyed three months in anticipation, and more than three in retrospection.

CHAPTER XII

PROGRESS OF KNOWLEDGE

It was one pleasant evening in the latter part of April that Gerty, who had been to see Miss Graham and bid her good-bye, before her departure for the country, stood at the back part of the yard, weeping bitterly. She was so full of grief at the parting with her, the first of those many sad partings life is so full of, that she did not hear anyone approach, and was unconscious of anyone's presence, until a hand was placed upon each of her shoulders, and, as she turned round, she found herself encircled by Willie's arms, and face to face with Willie's sunny countenance

"Why, Gerty!" said he, "this is no kind of a welcome, when I've come home to stay with you all the evening. Mother and grandfather are both gone out somewhere, and then, when I come to look for you, you're crying so I can't see your face through such oceans of tears. Come, come! *do* leave off!"

"Willie!" sobbed she, "do you know Miss Emily's gone?"

"Gone where?"

"'Way off, six miles, to stay all summer!"

But Willie only laughed. "Six miles!" said he; "that's a terrible way, certainly!"

"But I can't see her any more!" said Gerty.

"You can see her next winter," rejoined Willie.

"O, but that's so long," said the child.

"What makes you think so much of her?" asked Willie.

"She thinks much of me, she can't see me, and she likes me better than anybody but Uncle True."

"I don't believe it; I don't believe she likes you half so well as I do. How can she, when she's blind, and never saw you in her life, and I see you all the time, and love you better than I do anybody in the world, except my mother?"

"Do you *really*, Willie?"

"Yes, I do. I always think when I come home, 'Now I'm going to see Gerty'."

"I shouldn't think you'd like me so well."

"Why not?"

"O, because you're so handsome, and I an't handsome a bit. I heard Ellen Chase tell Lucretia Davis the other day, that she thought Gerty Flint was the worst-looking girl in the school."

"Then she ought to be ashamed of herself," said Willie. "I should hate the looks of *her*, or any *other* girl that said that."

"O, Willie!" exclaimed Gerty earnestly, "it's true; as true as can be."

"No, it an't *true*," said Willie. "To be sure, you haven't got long curls, and a round face, and blue eyes, like Belle Clinton's, and nobody'd think of setting you up for a beauty; but when you've been running, and have rosy cheeks, and your great black eyes shine, and you laugh so heartily as you do sometimes at anything funny, I often think you're the brightest-looking girl I ever saw in my life; and I don't care what other folks think, as long as I like your looks. I feel just as bad when you cry, or anything's the matter with you, as if 'twere myself, and worse."

Such professions of affection on Willie's part were frequent, and always responded to by a like declaration from Gerty. Nor were they mere professions. That they loved *each other* there could be no doubt, and, if in the spring the bond between them was already strong, autumn found it cemented by still firmer ties; for during Emily's absence Willie filled her place, and his own too; and though Gerty did not forget her blind friend, she passed a most happy summer, and continued to make such progress in her studies at school that, when Emily returned to the city in October, she could hardly understand how so much

had been accomplished in what had seemed to her so short a time.

The following winter, too, was passed most profitably by Gerty. Miss Graham's kindly feeling towards her little *protégée*, far from having diminished, seemed to have been increased by time and absence, and Gerty's visits to Emily became more frequent than ever. Emily had been in the habit, the previous winter, of hearing her read occasionally, that she might judge of her proficiency, now, however, she discovered, on the first trial, that the little girl had attained to a greater degree of excellence in this accomplishment than is common among grown people

Partly with a view to the child's benefit, and partly for her own gratification, she proposed that Gerty should come every day and read to her for an hour. It was agreed that when True started on his lamplighting expeditions he should take Gerty to Miss Graham's, and call for her on his return. Emily, in her choice of books, did not confine herself to such as came strictly within a child's comprehension But history, biography, and books of travels were perused by Gerty at an age when most children's literary pursuits are confined to stories and pictures. The child seemed indeed to give the preference to this comparatively solid reading; and, aided by Emily's kind explanations and encouragement, she stored up in her little brain many an important fact and much useful information.

Her especial favourite was a little work on astronomy, which puzzled her more than all the rest put together, but which delighted her in the same proportion, for it made some things clear, and all the rest, though a mystery still, was to her a beautiful mystery, and one which she fully meant sometime to explore to the uttermost

From the time Gerty was first admitted until she was twelve years old she continued to attend the public schools, and was rapidly advanced and promoted, but what she learned with Miss Graham, and acquired by study with Willie at home, formed nearly as important a part of her education.

It was but natural that, under such favourable influences as Gerty enjoyed, with Emily to advise and direct, and Willie to aid and encourage, her intellect should rapidly expand and strengthen But how is it with that little heart of hers, that, at once warm and affectionate, impulsive, sensitive, and passionate, now throbs with love and gratitude, and now again burns as vehemently with the consuming fire that a sense of wrong, a consciousness of injury to herself or her friends, would at any moment enkindle? Has she, in two years of happy childhood,

learned self-control? Has she also attained to an enlightened sense of the distinction between right and wrong, truth and falsehood? In short, has Emily been true to her self-imposed trust, her high resolve, to soften the heart and instruct the soul of the little ignorant one?

Miss Graham had appointed for herself no easy task when she undertook to inform the mind and heart of a child utterly untaught in the ways of virtue. In some important points, however, she experienced far less difficulty than she had anticipated For instance, after her first explanation to Gerty of the difference between honesty and dishonesty, the truth and a lie, she never had any cause to complain of the child, whose whole nature was the very reverse of deceptive, and whom nothing but extreme fear had ever driven to the meanness of falsehood. Under almost any circumstances, Gerty would have been too proud to keep back the truth, even before she became too virtuous. Emily was convinced, before she had known Gerty six months, that she could always depend upon her word; and nothing could have been a greater encouragement to Miss Graham's unselfish efforts than the knowledge that truth, the root of every holy thing, had thus easily and early been made to take up its abode in the child But this sensitive, proud temper of Gerty's seemed an inborn thing. abuse and tyranny had not been able to crush it Emily knew that to such a spirit even parental control is seldom sufficient. She knew but of one influence that is strong enough, one power that never fails to quell and subdue earthly pride and passion· the power of Christian humility engrafted into the heart—the humility of *principle*, of *conscience*—the only power to which native pride ever will pay homage.

She knew that a command of almost any kind laid upon Gerty by herself or Uncle True, would be promptly obeyed; for, in either case, the little girl would know that the order was given in love, and she would fulfil it in the same spirit; but, to provide for all contingencies, and to make the heart right as well as the life, it was necessary to inspire her with a higher motive than merely pleasing either of these friends; and, in teaching her the spirit of her Divine Master, Emily was making her powerful to do and to suffer, to bear and to forbear; when depending on herself, she would be left to her own guidance alone.

CHAPTER XIII

AN ADVENTURE AND A MISFORTUNE

One Saturday evening in December, the third winter of Gerty's residence with True, Willie came in with his French books under his arm, and exclaimed, as he threw the grammar and dictionary upon the table, "O, Gerty! before we begin to study, I *must* tell you and Uncle True the funniest thing that happened to-day; I have been laughing so at home as I was telling mother about it!"

"I heard you laugh," said Gerty. "If I had not been so busy, I should have gone into your mother's room, to hear what it was so very droll. But do tell us!"

"I should not be so much amused, if she hadn't been the very queerest old woman that ever I saw in my life."

"Old woman! You haven't told us about any old woman!"

"But I'm going to," said Willie. "You noticed how everything was covered with ice this morning. I declare, when the sun shone on that great elm-tree in front of our shop, I thought I never saw anything so beautiful in my life. But there, that's nothing to do with my old woman—only that the side-walks were just like everything else—a perfect glare."

"I know it," interrupted Gerty; "I fell down going to school."

"Did you?" said Willie. "Didn't you get hurt?"

"No, indeed. But go on; I want to hear about your old woman."

"I was standing at the shop door about eleven o'clock, looking out, when I saw the strangest-looking figure that you ever imagined coming down the street. She looked so ridiculous! She had on some kind of a black silk or satin gown, made very scant, and trimmed all round with some brownish-looking lace—black I suppose it had once been, but it isn't now; then she had a grey cloak, of some sort of silk material that you certainly would have said came out of the Ark, if it hadn't been for a little cape of a different colour that she wore outside of it. Her bonnet was twice as big as anybody else's, and she had a figured lace veil thrown over one side that reached nearly to her feet. But her goggles crowned all—such immense, horrid-looking things I never saw! She had a work-bag made of black silk, with pieces of cloth of all the colours in the rainbow sewed on to it, zigzag; then her pocket-handkerchief was pinned to her

bag, and a great feather fan—only think, at this season of the year!—that was pinned on somewhere—by a string, I suppose—and a bundle-handkerchief, and a newspaper! I can't think of half the things · but they were all pinned together with great brass pins, and hung in a body on her left arm. Her dress, though, wasn't the strangest thing about her. What made it too funny was to see her way of walking, she looked quite old and infirm; and it was evident she could hardly keep her footing on the ice; and yet she walked with such a smirk, such a consequential little air!"

"Some poor, crazy crittur, wasn't she?" asked True.

"O, no!" said Willie. "Just as she got opposite the shop door, her feet slipped, and the first thing I knew she fell flat on the pavement. I rushed out, for I thought the fall might have killed the poor little thing; and Mr. Bray, and a gentleman he was waiting upon, followed me. She did appear stunned, at first; but we carried her into the shop, and she came to her senses in a minute or two. Crazy you asked if she were, Uncle True? No, not she! She's as bright as you are! As soon as she opened her eyes, and seemed to know what she was about, she felt for her work-bag and all its appendages; counted them up, to see if the number was right, and then nodded her head very satisfactorily. Mr. Bray poured out a glass of cordial, and offered it to her. By this time she had got her airs and graces back again So when he recommended her to swallow the cordial, she retreated with a little old-fashioned curtsey, and put up both hands to express her horror at the idea of such a thing. The gentleman that was standing by smiled, and advised her to take it, telling her it would do her no harm. Upon that, she turned round, made another curtsey to him, and answered, in a little cracked voice, 'Can you assure me, sir, as a gentleman of candour, that it is not an exhilarating potion?' The gentleman could hardly keep from laughing; but he told her it was nothing that would hurt her. 'Then,' said she, 'I will venture to sip the beverage.' She seemed to like the taste as well as the smell, for she drank every drop of it, and set the glass down on the counter. She now seemed quite restored, and talked of starting again on her walk; but it really was not safe for her to go alone on the ice, and Mr. Bray asked her where she was going. She told him that she was proceeding to pass the day with somebody who lived in the neighbourhood of the Common. I touched Mr. Bray's arm, and said, in a low voice, that if he could spare me I'd go with her. He said he shouldn't want me for an hour, so I offered her my arm, and told her I should be happy to wait

upon her. You ought to have seen her then. If I had been a grown-up man, and she a young lady, she couldn't have tossed her head or giggled more But she took my arm, and we started off. I knew Mr. Bray and the gentleman were laughing to see us, but I didn't care; I pitied the old lady, and I did not mean she should get another tumble

"Every person we met stared at us; and it's no wonder they did, for we must have been a most absurd-looking couple. But I ought not to laugh at the poor thing, for she needed somebody to help her along, and I'm sure she wasn't heavy enough to tire me out, if she did make the most of herself. I shouldn't think her friends would let her go about the streets so, especially such walking as it is to-day."

"What's her name?" enquired Gerty "Didn't you find out?"

"No," answered Willie; "she wouldn't tell me. I asked her; but she only said, in her little cracked voice, that she was the *incognito*, and that it was the part of a true and gallant knight to discover the name of his fair lady. O, I promise you she was a case! Why, you never heard anyone talk so ridiculously as she did! I asked her how old she was Mother said that was very impolite, but it's the only uncivil thing I did or said, as the old lady would testify herself, if she were here."

"How old is she?" said Gerty.

"Sixteen."

"Why, Willie, what do you mean?"

"That's what she told me," returned Willie, "and a true and gallant knight is bound to believe his fair lady"

"Poor body!" said True—"she's childish!"

"No, she isn't, Uncle True," said Willie, "you'd think so, part of the time, to hear her run on with her nonsense, and then, the next minute, she'd speak as sensibly as anybody, and say how much obliged she was to me for showing such a spirit of conformity as to be willing to put myself to so much trouble for the sake of an old woman like her. Just as we turned into Beacon Street, we met a whole school of girls, handsome enough to kill, my old lady called them; and, from the instant they came in sight, she seemed to take it for granted I should try to get away from her, and run after some of them But she held on with a vengeance! Some of them stopped and stared at us—of course I didn't care how much they stared, but she seemed to think I should be terribly mortified; and when we had passed them all, she complimented me on my spirit of conformity—her favourite expression."

Here Willie paused, and True clapped him upon the shoulder.

"Good boy, Willie!" said he. "You always look out for the old folks, and that's right. Respect for the aged is a good thing; though your grandfather says it's very much out of fashion."

"I don't know much about fashion, Uncle True; but I should think it was a mean sort of a boy that would see an old lady get one fall on the ice, and not save her from another by seeing her safe home."

"Willie's always kind to everybody," said Gerty.

"Willie's either a hero," said the boy, "or else he has got two good friends—I rather think it's the latter. But come, Gerty, Charles the Twelfth is waiting for us, and we must study as much as we can to-night. We may not have another chance very soon, for Mr. Bray isn't well this evening; he seems threatened with a fever, and I promised to go back to the shop after dinner to-morrow."

"O, I hope Mr. Bray is not going to have a fever," said True and Gerty.

Willie hoped not, too; but his hopes gave place to his fears, when he found, on the following day, that his kind master was not able to leave his bed, and the doctor pronounced his symptoms alarming.

A typhoid fever set in, which in a few days terminated the life of the excellent apothecary.

The death of Mr. Bray was so sudden and dreadful a blow to Willie, that he did not at first realize the important bearing the event had upon his own fortunes. The shop was closed, the widow having determined to dispose of the stock, and remove into the country as soon as possible.

Willie was thus left without employment, and deprived of Mr. Bray's valuable recommendation and assistance. His earnings during the past year had been considerable, and had added essentially to the comfort of his mother and grandfather. The thought of being a burden to them, even for a day, was intolerable to the independent and energetic spirit of the boy; and he earnestly set himself to work to obtain another place. He commenced by applying to the different apothecaries in the city, but none of them wanted a youth of his age.

He returned home at night disappointed, but not by any means discouraged. If he could not obtain employment with an apothecary, he would do something else.

But he met with no success, and day after day returned home silent and depressed. He dreaded to meet his mother and grandfather, after every fresh failure. The care-worn, patient face of the former turned towards him so hopefully, that he could not

bear to sadden it by the recital of any new disappointment; and his grandfather's incredulity in the possibility of his ever having anything to do again was equally tantalizing, so long as he saw no hope of convincing him to the contrary.

CHAPTER XIV

BRIGHTENING PROSPECTS

This was altogether a new experience to Willie, and one of the most trying he could have been called upon to bear. But he bore it, and bore it bravely, kept all his worst struggles from his anxious mother and desponding grandfather, and resolved manfully to hope against hope. Gerty was now his chief comforter. He told her all his troubles, and, young as she was, she was a wonderful consoler. Always looking on the bright side, always prophesying better luck to-morrow, she did much towards keeping up his hopes and strengthening his resolutions Gerty was so quick, sagacious, and observing, that she knew more than most children of the various ways in which things are often brought about, and she sometimes made valuable suggestions to Willie, of which he gladly availed himself Among others, she one day asked him if he had applied at the agency offices He had never thought of it—wondered he had not, but would try the plan the very next day He did so, and for a time was buoyed up with the hopes held out to him, but they proved fleeting, and he was now almost in despair, when his eye fell upon an advertisement in a newspaper which seemed to afford still another chance He showed the notice to Gerty. It was just the thing He had only to apply, he was the very boy that man wanted,—just fifteen, smart, capable, and trustworthy, and would like, when he had learned the business, to go into partnership That was what was required; and Willie was the very person, she was sure

Gerty was so sanguine that Willie presented himself the next day at the place specified with a more eager countenance than he had ever yet worn. The gentleman, a sharp-looking man, with very keen eyes, talked with him some time, asked a great many questions, made the boy very uncomfortable by hinting his doubts about his capability and honesty, and, finally, wound up by declaring that under the most favourable circumstances, and with the very best recommendations, he could not think of engaging

with any young man unless his friends were willing to take some interest in the concern, and invest a small amount on his account.

This, of course, made the place out of the question for Willie, even if he had liked the man; which he did not, for he felt in his heart that he was a knave, or not many degrees removed from one

Until now, he had never thought of despairing; but when he went home after this last interview, it was with such a heavy heart, that it seemed to him utterly impossible to meet his mother, and so he went directly to True's room. It was the night before Christmas, True had gone out, and Gerty was alone There was a bright fire in the stove, and the room was dimly lighted by the last rays of the winter sunset, and by the glare of the coals, seen through one of the open doors of the stove

Gerty was engaged in preparing a cake for tea—one of the few branches of the cooking department in which she had acquired some little skill. She was just coming from the pantry, with a scoop full of meal in her hand, when Willie entered at the opposite door. The manner in which he tossed his cap upon the settle, and, seating himself at the table, leaned his head upon both his hands, betrayed at once to Gerty the defeat the poor boy had met with in this last encounter with ill-fate It was so unlike Willie to come in without even speaking—it was such a strange thing to see his bright young head bowed down with care, and his elastic figure looking tired and old,—that Gerty knew at once his brave heart had given way. She laid down the scoop, and, walking softly and slowly up to him, touched his arm with her hand, and looked up anxiously into his face Her sympathetic touch and look were more than he could bear. He laid his head on the table, and in a minute more Gerty heard great heavy sobs, each one of which sank deep into her soul. She often cried herself,—it seemed only natural, but Willie—the laughing, happy, light-hearted Willie—she had never seen *him* cry, she didn't know he *could.* She crept up on the rounds of his chair, and, putting her arm round his neck, whispered·

"I shouldn't mind, Willie, if I didn't get the place; I don't believe it's a *good* place"

"I don't believe it is, either," said Willie, lifting up his head; "but what shall I do, I can't get *any* place, and I can't stay here, doing nothing"

"We like to have you at home," said Gerty

"It's pleasant enough to be at home I was always glad enough to come home when I lived at Mr Bray's, and was earning something, and could feel as if anybody was glad to see me."

"*Everybody* is glad to see you *now.*"

"But not as they were *then*," said Willie, rather impatiently. "Mother always looks as if she expected to hear I'd got something to do; and grandfather, I believe, never thought I should be good for much; and now, as I was beginning to earn something and to be a help to them, I've lost my chance!"

"But that an't your fault, Willie, you couldn't help Mr. Bray's dying. I shouldn't think Mr Cooper would blame you for not having anything to do *now*."

"He don't *blame* me; but, if you were in my place, you'd feel just as I do, to see him sit in his arm-chair, evenings, and groan and look up at me, as much as to say—'It's *you* I'm groaning about'. He thinks this is a dreadful world, and that he's never seen any good luck in it himself; so I suppose he thinks I never shall."

"*I* think you will," said Gerty. "I think you'll be rich, some time—and *then* won't he be astonished?"

"O, Gerty! you're a nice child, and think I can do anything. If ever I am rich, I promise to go shares with you, but," added he despondingly, "'tan't so easy. I used to think I could make money when I grew up; but it's pretty slow business"

Here he was on the point of leaning down upon the table again, and giving himself up to melancholy; but Gerty caught hold of his hands "Come," said she, "Willie, don't think any more about it. People have troubles always, but they get over 'em; perhaps next week you'll be in a better shop than Mr. Bray's, and we shall be as happy as ever. Do you know," said she, by way of changing the subject (a species of tact which children understand as well as grown people), "it's just two years to-night since I came here?"

"Is it?" said Willie. "Did Uncle True bring you home with him the night before Christmas?"

"Yes"

"Why, that was Santa Claus carrying you to good things, instead of bringing good things to you, wasn't it?"

Gerty did not know anything about Santa Claus, that special friend of children; and Willie, who had only lately read about him in some book, undertook to tell her what he knew of the veteran toy-dealer.

Finding the interest of the subject had engaged his thoughts, in spite of himself, Gerty returned to her cooking, listening attentively, however, to his story. When he had finished, she was just putting her cake in the oven; and, as she sat on her knee by the stove, swinging the handle of the oven-door in her hand, her eyes twinkled with such a merry look, that Willie exclaimed: "What are you thinking of, Gerty, that makes you look so sly?"

"I was thinking that perhaps Santa Claus would come for you to-night. If he comes for folks that need something, I expect he'll come for you, and carry you to some place where you'll have a chance to grow rich."

"Very likely," said Willie, "he'll clap me into his bag, and trudge off with me as a present to somebody—some old Crœsus, that will give me a fortune for the asking I do hope he will; for if I don't get something to do before New Year, I shall give up in despair."

True now came in, and interrupted the children's conversation by the display of a fine turkey, a Christmas present from Mr. Graham He had also a book for Gerty, a gift from Emily.

"Isn't that queer?" exclaimed Gerty. "Willie was just saying you were my Santa Claus, Uncle True, and I do believe you are" As she spoke, she opened the book, and in the frontispiece was a portrait of that individual. "It looks like him, Willie! I declare it does!" shouted she; "a fur cap, a pipe, and just such a pleasant face. O! Uncle True, if you only had a sackful of toys over your shoulder, instead of your lantern and that great turkey, you would be a complete Santa Claus. Haven't you got anything for Willie, Uncle True?"

"Yes, I've got a little something; but I'm afraid he won't think much on't. It's only a bit of a note."

"A note for me?" enquired Willie. "Who can it be from?"

"Can't say," said True, fumbling in his great pockets; "only, just round the corner, I met a man who stopped me to enquire where Mrs Sullivan lived. I told him she lived just here, and I'd show him the house. When he saw I belonged here too, he gave me this little scrap o' paper, and asked me to hand it over, as it was directed, to Master William Sullivan. I s'pose that's you, ain't it?"

He now handed Willie the slip of paper; and the boy, taking True's lantern in his hand, and, holding the note up to the light, read aloud·

"R H Clinton would like to see William Sullivan on Thursday morning, between ten and eleven o'clock, at No. 13 —— Wharf."

Willie looked up in amazement "What does it mean?" said he, "I don't know any such person"

"I know who he is," said True; "why, it's he as lives in the great stone house in —— street. He's a rich man, and that's the number of his store—his counting-room, rather—on —— Wharf"

"What! father to those pretty children we used to see in the window?"

"The very same."

"What can he want of me?"

"Very likely he wants your services," suggested True

"Then it's a place!" cried Gerty; "a real good one, and Santa Claus came and brought it. I said he would! O Willie, I am so glad!"

Willie did not know whether to be glad or not. It was such a strange message, coming, too, from an utter stranger. He could not but hope, as Gerty and True did, that it might prove the dawning of some good fortune; but he had reasons, of which they were not aware, for believing that no offer from this quarter could be available to him, and therefore made them both promise to give no hint of the matter to his mother or Mr. Cooper.

On Thursday, which was the next day but one, being the day after Christmas, Willie presented himself at the appointed time and place. Mr. Clinton, a gentlemanly man, with a friendly countenance, received him very kindly, asked him but few questions, and did not even mention such a thing as a recommendation from his former employer; but, telling him that he was in want of a young man to fill the place of junior clerk in his counting-room, offered him the situation. Willie hesitated; for, though the offer was most encouraging to his future prospects, Mr. Clinton made no mention of any salary, and that was a thing the youth could not dispense with. Seeing that he was undecided, Mr. Clinton said, "Perhaps you do not like my proposal, or have already made some other engagement?"

"No, indeed," answered Willie, quickly. "You are very kind to feel so much confidence in a stranger as to be willing to receive me, and your offer is a most unexpected and welcome one; but I have been in a retail store, where I obtained regular earnings, which were very important to my mother and grandfather. I had far rather be in a counting-room, like yours, sir, and I think I might learn to be of use; but I know there are numbers of boys, sons of rich men, who would be glad to be employed by you, and would ask no compensation for their services, so that I could not expect any salary, at least for some years. I should, indeed, be well repaid, at the end of that time, by the knowledge I might gain of mercantile affairs; but, unfortunately, sir, I can no more afford it than I could afford to go to college."

The gentleman smiled. "How do you know so much of these matters, my young friend?"

"I have heard, sir, from boys who were at school with me, and are now clerks in mercantile houses, that they received no pay, and I always considered it a perfectly fair arrangement;

but it was the reason why I felt bound to content myself with the position I held in an apothecary's shop, which, though it was not suited to my taste, enabled me to support myself, and to relieve my mother, who is a widow, and my grandfather, who is old and poor."

"Your grandfather is——"

"Mr Cooper, sexton of Mr. Arnold's church."

"Aha!" said Mr. Clinton; "I know him.

"What you say, William," added he, after a moment's pause, "is perfectly true. We are not in the habit of paying any salary to our young clerks, and are overrun with applications at that rate; but I have heard good accounts of you, my boy (I sha'n't tell you where I had my information, though I see you look very curious), and, moreover, I like your countenance, and believe you will serve me faithfully. So, if you will tell me what you received from Mr Bray, I will pay you the same next year, and after that increase your salary, if I find you deserve it; and, if you please, you shall commence with me on the first of January."

Willie thanked Mr Clinton in the fewest possible words, and hastened away.

The spirits of those mothers who have wept, prayed, and thanked God for similar glad tidings from much-loved sons may know how to rejoice and sympathize with the good little Mrs Sullivan, when she heard from Willie his joyful news. Mr Cooper and Gerty also have their prototypes in many an old man, whose dim and world-worn eye lights up occasionally with the hope that, disappointed as he has been himself, he cannot help cherishing for his grandson; and in many a proud little sister, who now sees her noble brother appreciated by others, as he has always been by her. Nor, on such an occasion, is the band of rejoicing ones complete without some such hearty friend as True to come in unexpectedly, tap the boy on the shoulder, and exclaim, "Ah! Master Willie, they needn't have worried about you, need they? I've told your grandfather, more than once, that I was of the 'pinion 'twould all come out right at last"

The great mystery of the whole matter was Mr Clinton's ever having heard of Willie at all. Mrs Sullivan thought over all her small circle of acquaintances, and suggested a great many impossible ways But as, with much conjecturing, they came no nearer to the truth, they finally concluded to do as Gerty did, and set it all down to the agency of Santa Claus

CHAPTER XV

THE MINISTERING ANGEL

"I *wonder*," said old Mrs Grumble, as she sat at her window, "if I should live to be old and infirm"—[Mrs. Grumble was over seventy, but as yet suffered from no infirmity but that of a very irritable temper]—"I *wonder* if anybody would wait upon me, and take care of me, as that little girl does of her grandfather! No, I'll warrant not! Who can the patient little creature be?"

"There, look Belle!" said one young girl to another, as they walked up the shady side of the street, on their way to school, "there's the girl that we meet every day with the old man. How can you say that you don't think she's pretty?"

"You always do manage, Kitty, to *admire* people that everybody else thinks are horrid-looking"

"Horrid-looking!" replied Kitty, in a provoked tone; "she's anything but *horrid-looking*! Do notice, now, Belle, when we meet them, she has the *sweetest* way of looking up in the old man's face, and talking to him. I *wonder* what is the matter with him Do see how his arm shakes!"

The two couples are now close to each other, and they pass in silence

"*Don't you* think she has an interesting face?" said Kitty, as soon as they were out of hearing

"She's got handsome eyes," answered Belle. "I don't see anything else that looks interesting about her. I *wonder* if she don't hate to have to walk in the street with that old grandfather. I wouldn't do it for anything."

"Why, Belle!" exclaimed Kitty, "how can you talk so? I'm sure I pity that old man."

"Lor!" said Belle, "what's the use of pitying? If you are going to begin to pity, you'll have to do it all the time Look" —and here Belle touched her companion's elbow,—"there's Willie Sullivan, father's clerk. I want to stop and speak to him"

But before she could address a word to him, Willie passed her with a bow, and a pleasant "Good-morning, Miss Isabel"; and ere she had recovered from her surprise and disappointment, was some rods down the street.

"Why, Belle! do see," said Kitty, who was looking back over her shoulder, "he's overtaken the old man and the little girl

Look! He's put the old man's other arm through his, and they are all three walking off together. Isn't that quite a coincidence?"

"Nothing very remarkable," replied Belle, who seemed a little annoyed. "I suppose they are persons he's acquainted with. Come, make haste, we shall be late."

Reader! do *you wonder* who they are—the girl and the old man? or, have you already conjectured that they are no other than Gerty and Trueman Flint? True is no longer the brave, strong, sturdy protector of the feeble, lonely little child. The cases are quite reversed. True has had a paralytic stroke. His strength is gone—his power even to walk alone. He sits all day in his arm-chair, or on the old settle, when he is not out walking with Gerty. The blow came suddenly—struck down the robust man, and left him feeble as a child. And the little stranger, the orphan girl, who, in her weakness, her loneliness, and her poverty, found in him a father and a mother, she now is all the world to him—his staff, his stay, his comfort, and his hope. During four or five years that he has cherished the frail blossom, she has been gaining strength for the time when *he* should be the leaning, *she* the sustaining power; and when the time came—and it came full soon—she was ready to respond to the call. With the simplicity of a child, but a woman's firmness—with the stature of a child, but a woman's capacity—the earnestness of a child, but a woman's perseverance—from morning till night, the faithful little nurse and housekeeper labours untiringly in the service of her first, her best friend. Ever at his side, ever attending to his wants, and yet most wonderfully accomplishing many things which he never sees her do, she seems, indeed, to the fond old man, what he once prophesied she would become,—God's embodied blessing to his latter years, making light his closing days, and cheering even the pathway to the grave.

It had not long been thus. Only about two months previous to the morning of which we have been speaking had True been stricken down with this weighty affliction. He had been in failing health, but had still been able to attend to all his duties and labours, until one day in the month of June, when Gerty went into his room, and found, to her surprise, that he had not risen, although it was much later than his usual hour. On going to the bedside and speaking to him, she perceived that he looked strangely, and had lost the power of replying to her questions. Bewildered and frightened, she ran to call Mrs Sullivan. A physician was summoned, the case pronounced one of paralysis, and for a time there seemed reason to fear that it would prove fatal. He soon, however, began to amend, recovered his speech,

and in a week or two was well enough to walk about, with Gerty's assistance.

The doctor had recommended as much gentle exercise as possible, and every pleasant morning, before the day grew warm, Gerty presented herself bonneted and equipped for those walks, which, unknown to her, excited so much observation.

On the occasion already alluded to, Willie accompanied them as far as the provision shop, which was their destination; and, having seen True comfortably seated, proceeded to the Wharf, while Gerty stepped up to the counter. She purchased a bit of veal suitable for broth, gazed wistfully at some tempting vegetables, turned away and sighed She held in her hand the wallet which contained all their money; it was growing light, so she knew it was no use to think about the vegetables, and she sighed

"How much is the meat?" asked she of the rosy-cheeked butcher.

He named the sum. It was very little; *so little* that it almost seemed to Gerty as if he had seen into her purse, and her thoughts too, and knew how glad she would be that it did not cost any more As he handed her the change, he leaned over the counter, and asked, in an undertone, what kind of nourishment Mr. Flint was able to take

"The doctor said any wholesome food," replied Gerty.

"Don't you think he'd relish some green peas? I've got some first-rate ones, and, if you think he'd eat 'em, I should like to send you some."

"Thank you," said Gerty; "he likes green peas"

"Very well! Then I'll send him some beauties;" and he turned away to wait upon another customer, so quick that Gerty thought he did not see how the colour came into her face and the tears into her eyes But he *did* see, and that was the *reason* he turned away so quickly.

True had an excellent appetite, enjoyed and praised the dinner exceedingly, and, after eating heartily of it, fell asleep in his chair.

The moment he awoke, Gerty sprung to his side, exclaiming, "Uncle True, here's Miss Emily!"

"The Lord bless you, my dear young lady!" said True, trying to rise from his chair.

"Don't rise, Mr Flint, I beg you will not," exclaimed Emily, whose quick ear perceived the motion. "Please give me a chair, Gerty, nearer to Mr Flint"

She drew near, took True's hand, but looked inexpressibly shocked as she observed how tremulous it had become.

"Ah, Miss Emily," said he, "I'm not the same man as when I saw you last, the Lord has given me a warnin', and I sha'n't be here long!"

"I'm sorry I did not know of this," said Emily. "I never heard of your illness until to-day. George, my father's man, saw you and Gertrude at a shop this morning. I have been telling this little girl that she should have sent me a word."

Gerty was standing by True's chair, smoothing his grey locks. As Emily mentioned her name, he turned and looked at her. O, what a look of love he gave her! Gerty never forgot it

"Miss Emily," said he, "'twas no need for anybody to be troubled The Lord provided for me His own self. All the doctors and nurses in the land couldn't have done half as much for me as this little gal o' mine Ah! I little thought when I brought this little one home, Miss Emily, how the Lord would lay me low—how those feet of hers would run about in my service—how her bit of a hand would come in the dark nights to smooth my pillow, and I'd go about daytimes leaning on her little arm. Truly God's ways are not like our ways, nor His thoughts like our thoughts."

"O, Uncle True!" said Gerty, "I don't do much for you; I wish I could make you strong again"

"I daresay you do, my darlin', but that can't be in this world; you've given me what's far better than strength o' body. Yes, Miss Emily," added he, "it's you we have to thank for all the comfort we enjoy. I loved my little birdie, but I was a foolish man, and I should ha' spiled her. You knew better what was for her good, and mine too You made her what she is now—one of the lambs of Christ—a handmaiden of the Lord. When I first got so I could speak, after the shock, and tell what was in my mind, I was so mightily troubled a-thinkin' of my sad case, and Gerty with nobody to work or do anything for her, that I took on bad enough, and said, 'What shall we do now?' Then she whispered in my ear, 'God will take care of us, Uncle True!' And, in my deepest distress, when one night I was full of anxious thoughts about my child, I said aloud, 'If I die, who will take care of Gerty?' The little thing, that I supposed was sound asleep in her bed, laid her head down beside me, and said—'Uncle True, when I was turned out into the dark street all alone, and had no friends nor any home, my Heavenly Father sent you to me, and now, if He wants you to come to Him, and is not ready to take me too, He will send somebody else to take care of me the rest of the time I stay.' After that, Miss Emily, I gave up worryin' any more Her words, and the blessed teachin's of the

Holy Book that she reads me every day have sunk deep into my heart, and I'm at peace"

When he finished speaking, Gerty, whose face had been hid against his shoulder, looked up and said bravely—"O Uncle True, I'm sure I can do almost any kind of work."

"Mr. Flint," said Emily, "would you be willing to trust your child with me? If you should be taken from her, would you feel as if she were safe in my charge?"

"Miss Emily," said True, "would I think her safe in angel-keepin'? I should believe her in little short o' that, if she could have you to watch over her."

"O, do not say that," said Emily, "or I shall be afraid to undertake so solemn a trust. But, since you approve of the teaching I have already given her, and are so kind as to think a great deal better of me than I deserve, I know you will at least believe in the sincerity of my wish to be of use to her; and if it will be any comfort to you to know that in case of your death I will gladly take Gerty to my home, see that she is well educated, and, as long as I live, provide for and take care of her, you have my solemn assurance that it shall be done, and that to the best of my ability I will try to make her happy."

Gerty's first impulse was to rush towards Emily, and fling her arms round her neck; but she was arrested in the act, for she observed that True was weeping like an infant In an instant his feeble head was resting upon her bosom, and her hand was wiping away the great tears that had rushed to his eyes

"Ah, Miss Emily!" said the old man, "my time's about out; and, since your willin', you'll soon be called to take charge on her. I haven't forgot how tossed I was in my mind, the day after I brought her home with me, with thinkin' that p'r'aps I wasn't fit to undertake the care of such a little thing; and then, Miss Emily, do you remember you said to me, 'You have done quite right; the Lord will bless and reward you'? I've thought many a time since that you was a true prophet, and now you talk o' doing the same thing yourself: and I, that am just goin' home to God, and feel as if I read His ways clearer than ever afore, *I tell you*, Miss Emily, that you're doin' right too; and, if the Lord rewards you as He has done me, there'll come a time when this child will pay you back in love and care all you ever do for her.—Gerty?"

"She's not here," said Emily; "I heard her run into her own room"

"Poor birdie!" said True, "she doesn't like to hear o' my leavin' her. I was goin' to bid her be a good child to you, but

I think she will, without biddin', and I can say my say to her another time Good-bye, my dear young lady"—for Emily had risen to go, and George, the man-servant, was waiting at the door for her;—"if I never see you again, remember that you've made an old man so happy that he's nothing in this world left to wish for; and that you carry with you a dyin' man's best blessin'."

That evening, when True had already retired to rest, and Gerty had finished reading aloud in her little Bible, True called her to him, and asked her, as he had often done of late, to repeat his favourite prayer for the sick. She knelt at his bedside, and with a solemn and touching earnestness fulfilled his request.

"Now, darlin', the prayer for the dyin'."

Gerty trembled. Concentrating all her energy and self-command, however, she began; and, gaining strength as she proceeded, went on to the end Once or twice her voice faltered, but with new effort she succeeded, in spite of the great bunches in her throat; and her voice sounded so clear and calm, that Uncle True's devotional spirit was not once disturbed by the thought of the girl's sufferings.

She did not rise at the conclusion of the prayer—she could not —but remained kneeling, her head buried in the bed-clothes. For a few moments there was a solemn stillness in the room; then the old man laid his hand upon her head.

She looked up.

"You love Miss Emily, don't you, birdie?"

"Yes, indeed."

"You'll be a good child to her when I'm gone?"

"O, Uncle True!" sobbed Gerty. "You mustn't leave me! I can't live without you!"

"It is God's will to take me, Gerty. And Miss Emily can do more for you than I could, and you'll be very happy with her"

"No, I sha'n't!—I sha'n't ever be happy again in this world! I never was happy until I came to you; and now, if you die, I wish I could die too!"

"You mustn't wish that, darlin', you are young, and must try to do good in the world, and bide your time I'm an old man, and only a trouble now"

"No, no!" said Gerty, earnestly, "you are not a trouble I wish *I'd* never been so much trouble to *you*"

"So far from that, birdie, God knows you've long been my heart's delight! I feel as if the Lord would call me soon—sooner than you think for now, and at first you'll cry, and be sore vexed, no doubt; but Miss Emily will take you with her, and she'll tell

you blessed things to comfort you; and Willie'll do everything he can to help you in your sorrer, and in time you'll be able to smile again. At first, and p'r'aps for a long time, Gerty, you'll be a care to Miss Emily, and she'll have to do a deal for you in the way o' schoolin', clothin', and so on; and what I want to tell you is, that Uncle True expects you'll be as good as can be, and do just what Miss Emily says; and, by and by, maybe, when you're bigger and older, you'll be able to do somethin' for her. And when you're sad and troubled (for everybody is sometimes), then think of Uncle True, and how he used to say, 'Cheer up, birdie, for I'm of the 'pinion 'twill all come out right at last'. There, don't feel bad about it; go to bed, darlin', and to-morrow we'll have a nice walk."

Gerty tried to cheer up, for True's sake, and went to bed. She dreamed that morning was already come; that she, and Uncle True, and Willie were taking a pleasant walk together. And, while she dreamed the beautiful dream, little thinking that her first friend and she should no longer tread life's paths together, the messenger came—a gentle, noiseless messenger, and, in the still night, while the world was asleep, took the soul of good old True, and carried it home to God!

CHAPTER XVI

A NEW HOME

Two months have passed since Trueman Flint's death, and Gertrude has for a week been domesticated in Mr. Graham's family.

After Mr. Flint's death Gertrude went with the Sullivans for several weeks into the country, where abundance of novelty, of country fare, healthful exercise, and heartfelt kindness and sympathy, brought the colour into her cheek, and calmness and composure, if not happiness, into her heart

Soon after the Sullivans' return from their excursion, the Grahams removed to the city, and, as we have said, Gertrude had now been with them about a week.

"Are you still standing at the window, Gertrude? What are you doing, dear?" asked Miss Graham.

"I'm watching to see the lamps lit, Miss Emily."

"But they will not be lit at all The moon will rise at eight

o'clock, and light the streets sufficiently for the rest of the night."

"I don't mean the street-lamps"

"What do you mean, my child?" said Emily, coming towards the window, and lightly resting a hand on each of Gertrude's shoulders.

"I mean the stars, dear Miss Emily. O, how I wish you could see them, too!"

"Are they very bright?"

"O, they are beautiful! and there are so many! The sky is as full as it can be."

"How well I remember when I used to stand at this very window, and look at them as you are doing now! It seems to me as if I saw them this moment, I know so well how they look."

"I love the stars—all of them," said Gertrude; "but my own star I love the best"

"Which do you call yours?"

"That splendid one there, over the church steeple; it shines into my room every night, and looks me in the face. Miss Emily" (and here Gertrude lowered her voice to a whisper), "it seems to me as if that star were lit on purpose for me I think Uncle True lights it every night I always feel as if he were smiling up there, and saying, 'See, Gerty, I'm lighting the lamp for you'. Dear Uncle True! Miss Emily, do you think he loves me now?"

"I do indeed, Gertrude; and I think if you make him an example, and try to live as good and patient a life as he did, that he will really be a lamp to your feet, and as bright a light to your path as if his face were shining down upon you through the star"

"I was patient and good when I lived with him; at least I almost always was; and I'm good when I'm with you; but I don't like Mrs. Ellis She tries to plague me, and she makes me cross, and then I get angry, and don't know what I do or say. I did not mean to be impertinent to her to-day, and I wish I hadn't slammed the door, but how could I help it, Miss Emily, when she told me right before Mr Graham, that I tore up the last night's *Journal*, and I *know* that I did not? It was an old paper that she saw me tying your slippers up in, and I am almost sure that she lit the library fire with that very *Journal* herself, but Mr Graham will always think I did it."

"I have no doubt, Gertrude, that you have some reason to feel

provoked; and I believe you when you say that you were not to blame for the loss of the newspaper. But you must remember, my dear, that there is no merit in being patient and good-tempered when there is nothing to irritate you. I want you to learn to bear even injustice, without losing your self-control. You know Mrs. Ellis has been here a number of years, and is not used to young people. She is a very faithful woman—very kind and attentive to me, and very important to my father. It will make me unhappy if I have any reason to fear that you and she will not live pleasantly together."

"I do not want to make you unhappy; I do not want to be a trouble to anybody," said Gertrude, with some excitement; "I'll go away! I'll go where you will never see me again!"

"Gertrude!" said Emily, seriously and sadly, and as she spoke she turned her round, and brought her face to face with herself—"Gertrude, do you wish to leave your blind friend? Do you not love me?"

So touchingly grieved was the expression of the countenance that met her gaze, that Gertrude's proud, hasty spirit was subdued. She threw her arms round Emily's neck, and exclaimed, "No! dear Miss Emily, I would not leave you for all the world! I will do just as you wish. I will never be angry with Mrs. Ellis again, for your sake."

"Not for *my* sake, Gertrude," replied Emily, "for your own sake—for the sake of duty. A few years ago I should not have expected you to be pleasant and amiable towards anyone who you felt ill-treated you, but now that you know so well what is right—now that you are familiar with the life of that blessed Master, Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again—now that you have learned faithfully to fulfil so many important duties, I had hoped that you had learned, also, to be forbearing under the most trying circumstances. What you are experiencing now, being a new trial, you must bring new strength to bear upon it; and I have such confidence in you as to believe that, knowing my wishes, you will try to behave properly to Mrs. Ellis on all occasions."

"I will, Miss Emily. I'll not answer her back when she's ugly to me, if I have to bite my lips to keep them together."

"O, I do not believe it will be so bad as that," said Emily, smiling. "Mrs Ellis's manner is rather rough, but you will get used to her."

Just then a voice w[illegible] the entry. "To see *Miss Flint*? Really! Well, *Miss* [illegible] Miss Emily's room. She's going to entertain co[illegible]

Gertrude coloured to her temples, for it was Mrs. Ellis's voice, and the tone in which she spoke was very derisive

Emily stepped to the door, and opened it.—"Mrs. Ellis."

"What say, Emily?"

"Is there anyone below?"

"Yes, a young man wants to see Gertrude—it's that young man Sullivan, I believe"

"Willie!" cried Gertrude, starting forward

"You can go down and see him, Gertrude," said Emily. "Come back here when he's gone; and Mrs Ellis, I wish you would step in and put my room a little in order. I think you will find plenty of pieces for your rag-bag about the carpet—Miss Randolph always scatters so many when she is engaged with her dressmaking"

Mrs Ellis made her collection, and then, seating herself on a couch at the side of the fireplace, commenced speaking of Gertrude

"What are you going to do with her, Emily?" said she—"send her to school?"

"Yes, she will go to Mr. W——'s this winter"

"Why! Isn't that a very expensive school for a child like her?"

"It is expensive, certainly, but I wish her to be with the best teacher I know of, and father makes no objection to the terms He thinks as I do, that if we undertake to fit her to instruct others, she must be thoroughly taught herself. I wish to keep her with me as long as I can, not only because I am fond of the child, but she is delicate and sensitive, and now that she is so sad about old Mr. Flint's death, I think we ought to do all we can to make her happy; don't you, Mrs Ellis?"

"I always calculate to do my duty," said Mrs Ellis, rather stiffly "Where is she going to sleep when we get settled?"

"In the little room at the end of the passage."

"Then, where shall I keep the linen press?"

"Can't it stand in the back entry?"

"I suppose it must," said Mrs Ellis, flouncing out of the room, and muttering to herself "Everything turned topsy-turvy for the sake of that little upstart!"

Mrs. Ellis had long had her own way in the management of all household matters at Mr Graham's, and had consequently become rather tyrannical. She was capable, methodical, and neat, accustomed to a small family, and now for many years quite *unaccustomed* to children, Gertrude was in her eyes an unwarrantable intruder—one who must of necessity be continu-

ally in mischief, continually deranging her most cherished plans. More than all this, she saw in the new inmate a formidable rival to herself in Miss Graham's affections; and Mrs. Ellis could not brook the idea of being second in the regard of Emily. Owing to all these circumstances, Mrs. Ellis was far from being favourably disposed towards Gertrude, and Gertrude, in her turn, was not yet prepared to love Mrs Ellis very cordially.

CHAPTER XVII

WHO ARE HAPPY?

Emily sat alone in her room. Willie still detained Gertrude in the little library below stairs, and Emily, with the moonlight now streaming across the chamber, which was none the less dark to her on that account, was indulging in a long train of meditation Her head rested on her hand; her face, usually so placid, was sad and melancholy in its expression, and her whole appearance and attitude denoted despondency and grief As thought pressed upon thought, and past sorrows arose in quick succession, her head gradually sank upon the cushions of the couch where she sat, and tears slowly trickled through her fingers.

Suddenly a hand was laid softly upon hers She gave a quick start, as she always did when surprised, for her unusual preoccupation of mind had made Gertrude's approaching step unheard

"Is anything the matter, Miss Emily?" said Gertrude "Do you like best to be alone, or may I stay?"

The sympathetic tone, the delicacy of the child's question, touched Emily She drew her towards her, saying, as she did so, "O yes, stay with me," then observing, as she passed an arm round the little girl, that she trembled, and seemed violently agitated, she added, "But what is the matter with you, Gerty? What makes you tremble and sob so?"

At this Gertrude broke forth with, "O Miss Emily! I thought you were crying when I came in, and I hoped you would let me come and cry with you; for I'm so miserable I can't do anything else"

Calmed herself by the more vehement agitation of the child, Emily endeavoured to discover the cause of this evidently new and severe affliction. It proved to be this. Willie had been

to tell her that he was going away, going out of the country; as Gertrude expressed it—to the very other end of the world, to India. Mr. Clinton was interested in a mercantile house at Calcutta, and had offered William the most favourable terms to go abroad as clerk to the establishment. The prospect thus afforded was far better than he could hope for by remaining at home; the salary was, at the very first, sufficient to defray all his own expenses, and provide for the wants of those who were now becoming every year more and more dependent upon him. The chance, too, of future advancement was great Though the young man's affectionate heart clung fondly to home and friends, there was no hesitation in his mind as to the course which both duty and interest prompted. He agreed to the proposal

"Miss Emily," said Gertrude, when she had acquainted her with the news, and become again somewhat calm, "how can I bear to have Willie go away? He is so kind, and loves me so much! He was always better than any brother, and, since Uncle True died, he has done everything in the world for me I believe I could not have borne Uncle True's death if it had not been for Willie; and now, how can I let him go away?"

"It is hard, Gertrude," said Emily, kindly; "but it is no doubt for his advantage; you must try and think of that."

"I know it," replied Gertrude "I suppose it is, but, Miss Emily, you do not know how I love Willie! O, I don't think you have any idea what friends we are!"

Gertrude had unconsciously touched a chord that vibrated through Emily's whole frame Her voice trembled as she answered, "*I*, Gertrude!—*not know*, my child? I know better than you imagine how dear he must be to you. *I*, too, had——" Then checking herself, she paused abruptly, and there was a few moments' silence, during which Emily got up, walked hastily to the window, pressed her aching head against the frosty glass, and then, returning to Gertrude, said, in a voice which had recovered its usual calmness, "O Gertrude! in the grief that oppresses you now, you little realize how much you have to be thankful for. Think, my dear, what a blessing it is that Willie will be where you can often hear from him, and where he can have constant news of his friends"

"Yes," replied Gerty, "he says he shall write to his mother and me very often"

"Then, too," said Emily, "you ought to rejoice at the good opinion Mr. Clinton must have of Willie; the perfect confidence he must feel in his uprightness, to place in him so much trust."

"So it is," said Gertrude, "I did not think of that."

"And you have lived so happily together," continued Emily, "and will part in such perfect peace O Gertrude! such a parting as that should not make you sad. Be patient, my dear child; do your duty, and perhaps there will some day be a happy meeting that will repay you for all you suffer in the separation."

Emily's voice trembled as she uttered the last few words Gertrude's eyes were fixed upon her with a puzzled expression. "Miss Emily," said she, "I begin to think that everybody has trouble."

"Certainly, Gertrude, can you doubt it?"

"I did not use to think so I fancied that rich people were all happy; and, though you are blind, and that is a dreadful thing, I supposed you were used to it; and you always looked so pleasant and quiet, I took it for granted nothing ever vexed you now. And then, Willie!—I believed once that nothing could make him look sad, but when he hadn't any place I saw him really cry, and then, when Uncle True died, and now again to-night, when he was telling me about going away, he could hardly speak, he felt so bad. And so, Miss Emily, since I see that you and Willie have troubles, and that tears will come though you try to keep them back, I think the world is full of trials, and that everybody gets a share"

"It *is* the lot of humanity, Gertrude, and we must not expect it to be otherwise"

"Then who can be happy, Miss Emily?"

"Those only, my child, who have learned submission; those who, in the severest afflictions, see the hand of a loving Father, and, obedient to His will, kiss the chastening rod."

"It is very hard, Miss Emily."

"It is hard, my child, and therefore few in this world can rightly be called happy, but, if, even in the midst of our distress, we can look to God in faith, in love, we may, when the world is dark around, experience a peace that is a foretaste of heaven"

Gertrude had often found in time and the soothing influences of religious faith some alleviation to her trials, but never, until this night, did she feel a spirit not of earth, coming forth from the very chaos of sorrow into which she was plunged, and enkindling within her the flame of a higher and nobler sensation than she ever yet had cherished

Willie's departure was sudden, and Mrs Sullivan had only a week in which to make those arrangements which a mother's thoughtfulness deems necessary. Her hands were therefore full

of work, and Gerty, whom Emily at once relinquished for the short time previous to the vessel's sailing, was of great assistance to her. Willie was very busy during the day, but was always with them in the evening.

On one occasion he returned home about dusk, and, his mother and grandfather both being out, he said to Gertrude, "Come, Gerty, if you are not afraid of taking cold, come and sit on the door-step with me as we used to do in old times; there will be no more such warm days as this, and we may never have another chance to sit there, and watch the moon rise above the old house at the corner."

"O Willie!" said Gertrude, "do not speak of our never being together in this old place again! I cannot bear the thought; there is not a house in Boston I could ever love as I do this

"Nor I," replied Willie; "but there is not one chance in a hundred, if I should be gone five years, that there would not be a block of brick stores in this spot, when I come to look for it I wish I did not think so, for I shall have many a longing after the old home."

"But what will become of your mother and grandfather, if this house is torn down?'

"It is not easy to tell, Gerty, what will become of any of us by that time; but, if there is any necessity for their moving, I hope I shall be able to provide a better house than this for them"

"You won't be here, Willie"

"I know it, but I shall be always hearing from you, and we can talk about it by letters, and arrange everything. The idea of any such changes, after all," added he, "is what troubles me most in going away, I think they would miss me and need me so much Gertrude, you will take care of them, won't you?"

"I!" said Gertrude, in amazement; "such a child as I!—what can I do?"

"If I am gone five or ten years, Gerty, you will not be a child all that time, and a woman is often a better dependence than a man; especially such a good, brave woman as you will be. I have not forgotten the beautiful care you took of Uncle True; and, whenever I imagine grandfather or mother old and helpless, I always think of you, and hope you will be near them; for I know, if you are, you will be a greater help than I could be So I leave them in your care, Gerty, though you *are* only a child yet"

"Thank you, Willie," said Gertrude, "for believing I shall do everything I can for them. I certainly will, as long as I live But, Willie, *they* may be strong and well all the time you are

gone, and *I*, although I am so young, may be sick and die—nobody knows"

"That is true enough," said Willie, sadly; "and I may die myself, but it will not do to think of that. It seems to me I never should have courage to go, if I didn't hope to find you all well and happy when I come home. You must write to me every month, for it will be a much greater task to mother, and I am sure she will want you to do nearly all the writing; and, whether my letters come directed to her or you, it will be all the same, you know. And, Gerty, you must not forget me, darling, you must love me just as much when I am gone—won't you?"

"Forget you, Willie! I shall always be thinking of you, and loving you the same as ever. What else shall I have to do? But you will be off in a strange country, where everything will be different, and you will not think half as much of me, I know"

"If you believe that, Gertrude, it is because you do *not* know. You will have friends all around you, and I shall be alone in a foreign land, but every day of life my heart will be with you and my mother, and I shall live here a great deal more than there."

On Willie's thus leaving home, for the first time, to struggle and strive among men, Mr. Cooper, who could not yet believe that the boy would be successful in the war with fortune, gave him many a caution against indulging hopes which never would be realized, and reminded him again and again that he knew nothing of the world.

Mrs Sullivan bestowed on her son but little parting counsel. Trusting to the lessons he had been learning from his childhood, she compressed her parental advice in a few words, saying, "Love and fear God, Willie, and do not disappoint your mother"

We pause not to dwell upon the last night the youth spent at his home, his mother's last evening prayer, her last morning benediction, the last breakfast they all took together, Gertrude among the rest, or the final farewell embrace.

And now, in truth, commenced Gertrude's residence at Mr. Graham's, hitherto in various ways interrupted. She at once commenced attending school, and until the spring laboured diligently at her studies. Her life was varied by few incidents, for Emily never entertained much company, and in the winter scarcely any at all, and Gertrude formed no intimate acquaintances among her companions. With Emily she passed many happy hours, they took walks, read books, and talked much with each other, and Miss Graham found that in Gertrude's observing eyes, and her

feeling and glowing descriptions of everything that came within their gaze, she was herself renewing her acquaintance with the outside world In errands of charity and mercy, Gertrude was either her attendant or her messenger; and all the dependants of the family, from the cook to the little boy who called at the door for the fragments of broken bread, agreed in loving and praising the child, who, though neither beautiful nor elegantly dressed, had a fairy lightness of step, a grace of movement and a dignity of bearing, which impressed them all with the conviction that she was no beggar in spirit, whatever might be her birth or fortune—and all were in the invariable habit of addressing her as *Miss* Gertrude

Mrs Ellis's prejudices against her were still strong; but, as Gertrude was always civil, and Emily prudently kept them much apart, no unhappy result had yet ensued.

Mr Graham, seeing her sad and pensive, did not at first take much notice of her; but, having on several occasions found his newspaper carefully dried, and his spectacles miraculously restored after a vain search on his part, he began to think her a smart girl

She went often to see Mrs Sullivan, and, as the spring advanced, they began to look for news of Willie. No tidings had come, however, when the season arrived for the Grahams to remove into the country for the summer. A letter written by Gertrude to Willie, soon after they were established there, will give some idea of her situation and mode of life.

After dwelling at some length upon the disappointment of not having yet heard from him, and giving an account of the last visit she had made to his mother before leaving the city, she went on to say —

"You will think that now, while I am not going to school, I shall hardly know what to do with my time; but I have plenty to do The first week after we came here, however, I found the mornings very dull You know I am always an early riser; but as it does not agree with Miss Emily to keep early hours I never see her until eight o'clock, full two hours after I am up and dressed When we were in Boston I always spent that time studying; but this spring, Miss Emily, who noticed that I was growing fast, and heard Mr Arnold observe how pale I looked, fancied it would not do for me to spend so much time at my books, and so, when we came to D——, she planned my study-hours, which are very few, and arranged that they should take place after breakfast, and in her own room She also advised me, if I could, to sleep later in the morning; but I could not, and was up at my usual time,

wandering about the garden. One day I was quite surprised to find Mr Graham at work, for it was not like his winter habits; but he is a queer man He asked me to come and help him plant onion-seeds, and I rather think I did it pretty well, for after that he let me help him plant a number of things, and label little sticks to put down by the side of them. At last, to my joy, he offered to give me a piece of ground for a garden, where I might raise flowers He does not care for flowers, which seems *so* strange, he only raises vegetables and trees

"And so I am to have a garden But I am making a very long story, Willie, and have not time to say a thousand other things that I want to O! if I could see you, I could tell you in an hour more than I can write in a week! In five minutes I expect to hear Miss Emily's bell, and then she will send for me to come and read to her.

"I long to hear from you, dear Willie, and pray to God morning and evening to keep you in safety, and soon send tidings of you to your loving "GERTY."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RULING PASSION CONTROLLED

A few weeks after the date of this letter, Gerty learned through George, who went daily to the city, to attend to the marketing, that Mrs. Sullivan had left word at the shop of our old acquaintance, the rosy-cheeked butcher, that she had received a letter from Willie, and wanted Gerty to come into town and see it Emily was willing to let her go, and a place was secured for her in the omnibus, and Gertrude set forth on her expedition with beaming eyes and a full heart She found Mrs Sullivan and Mr. Cooper well, and rejoicing over the happiest tidings from Willie, who, after a long but agreeable voyage, had reached Calcutta in health and safety. A description of his new home, his new duties and employers, filled all the rest of the letter, excepting what was devoted to affectionate messages and enquiries, a large share of which were for Gerty Gertrude stayed and dined with Mrs. Sullivan, and then hastened to the omnibus She took her seat, and, as she waited for the coach to start, amused herself with watching the passers-by. It was nearly three o'clock, and she was beginning to think she should be the only passenger, when she

heard a strange voice proceeding from a person whose approach she had not perceived. She moved towards the door, and saw, standing at the back of the coach, the most singular-looking being she had ever beheld. She was an old lady, small, and considerably bent with years. Gertrude knew, at a glance, that the same original mind must have conceived and executed every article of the most remarkable toilet she had ever witnessed. But, before she could observe the details of that which was, as a whole, so wonderfully grotesque, her whole attention was arrested by the peculiar behaviour of the old lady.

She had been vainly endeavouring to mount the inconvenient vehicle, and now, with one foot upon the lower step, was calling to the driver to come to her assistance.

"Sir," said she, in measured tones, "is this travelling equipage under your honourable charge?"

"What say, marm?—Yes, I'm the driver;" saying which, he came up to the door, opened it, and, without waiting for the polite request which was on the old lady's lips, placed his hand beneath her elbow, and, before she was aware of his intention, lifted her into the coach and shut the door.

"Bless me!" ejaculated she, as she seated herself opposite Gertrude, and began to arrange her veil and other draperies, "that individual is not versed in the art of assisting a lady without detriment to her habiliments. O dear!" added she, "I've lost my parasol."

She rose as she spoke, but the sudden starting of the coach threw her off her balance, and she would have fallen, had it not been for Gertrude, who caught her by the arm and reseated her, saying, as she did so, "Do not be alarmed, madam; here is the parasol."

As she spoke she drew into view the missing article, which, though nearly the size of an umbrella, was fastened to the old lady's waist by a green ribbon. And not a parasol only did she thus bring to light; numerous other articles, arranged in the same manner, and connected with the same green string, now met Gertrude's astonished eyes—a reticule of unusual dimensions and a great variety of colours, a black lace cap, a large feather fan, a roll of fancy paper, and several other articles. Before the coach had gone many steps, she deliberately placed her feet on the opposite seat, and proceeded to make herself comfortable. In the first place, much to Gertrude's horror, she took out all her teeth, and put them in her work-bag, then drew off a pair of black silk gloves, and replaced them by cotton ones, removed her lace veil, and folded and pinned it to the green string. She next untied her

bonnet, threw over it, as a protection from the dust, a large cotton handkerchief, and with some difficulty unloosening her fan, applied herself diligently to the use of it, closing her eyes as she did so, and evidently intending to go to sleep. She probably did fall into a dose, for she was very quiet, and Gertrude, occupied with her own thoughts, and with observing some heavy clouds that were rising from the west, forgot to observe her fellow-traveller, until she was startled by a hand suddenly laid upon her own, and an abrupt exclamation of "My dear young damsel, do not those dark shadows betoken adverse weather?"

"I think it will rain very soon," replied Gertrude.

"This morn, when I ventured forth," soliloquized the old lady, "the sun was bright, the sky serene; even the winged songsters, as they piped their hymns, proclaimed their part in the universal joy: and now, before I can regain my retirement, my delicate lace flounces will prove a sacrifice to the pitiless storm."

"Doesn't the coach pass your door?" enquired Gertrude, her compassion excited by the old lady's distress

"No, O, no! not within half a mile Does it better accommodate you, my young miss?"

"No; I have a mile to walk beyond the omnibus office"

The old lady, moved by a deep sympathy, drew nearer to Gertrude, saying, in the most doleful accents, "Alas, for the delicate whiteness of your bonnet-ribbon!"

The coach had by this time reached its destination, and the two passengers alighted. They had walked about a quarter of a mile, and that at a very slow rate, when the rain commenced falling, and now Gertrude was called upon to unloose the huge parasol, and carry it over her companion and herself. In this way they had accomplished nearly as much more of the distance, when the water began to descend in torrents At this moment Gertrude heard a step behind them, and, turning, she saw George, Mr. Graham's man, running in the direction of the house. He recognized her at once, and exclaimed, "Miss Gertrude, you'll be wet through, and Miss Pace, too," added he, seeing Gerty's companion "Sure, and ye'd better baith hasten to her house, where ye'll be secure"

So saying, he caught Miss Pace in his arms, and signing to Gertrude to follow, rushed across the street, and hurrying on to a cottage near by, did not stop until he had placed the old lady in safety beneath her own porch; Gerty at the same instant gaining its shelter Miss Pace (for such was the old lady's name) was so bewildered, that it took her some minutes to recover her consciousness; in the meantime it was arranged that Gertrude

should stop where she was for an hour or two, and that George should call for her with the carriage.

Miss Patty Pace was not generally considered a person of much hospitality. She owned the cottage which she occupied, and lived there quite alone, keeping no servants and entertaining no visitors. But though, through her travelling propensities and her regular attendance at church, she was well known, Gertrude was, perhaps, the first visitor that had ever entered her house; and she, as we have seen, could scarcely be said to have come by invitation.

Once come to a distinct consciousness of her situation, and Miss Patty Pace conducted herself with all the elegant politeness for which she was remarkable Suffering though she evidently was with a thousand regrets at the trying experience her own clothes had sustained, she commanded herself sufficiently to express nearly as many fears lest Gertrude had ruined every article of her dress It was only after many assurances from the latter that her boots were scarcely wet at all, her gingham dress and cape not likely to be hurt by rain, and her nice straw bonnet safe under the scarf she had thrown over it, that Miss Patty could be prevailed upon so far to forget the duties of a hostess as to retire and change her lace flounces for something more suitable for home wear.

Miss Pace's room was as remarkable as its owner. Its furniture, like her apparel, was made up of the gleanings of every age and fashion—from chairs that undoubtedly came over in the "Mayflower", to feeble attempts at modern pin-cushions, and imitations of crystallized grass that were a complete failure Gertrude's quick eye was revelling amid these relics of ancient elegance, when the old lady returned

A neat, though quaint, black dress having taken the place of the much-valued flounces, she now looked far more ladylike. She held in her hand a tumbler of pepper and water, and, while enjoying the refreshment, carried on a conversation which at one moment satisfied her visitor she was a woman of sense, and the next persuaded her that she was either foolish or insane.

The impression which Gertrude made upon Miss Patty was more decided Miss Patty was delighted with the young miss, who, she declared, possessed an intellect that would do honour to a queen, a figure that was airy as a gazelle, and motions more graceful than those of a swan, and when George came for her, Miss Pace cordially invited her to come again

At the door of her room Gertrude met Bridget, the housemaid, with a dust-pan, broom, &c. On enquiring what was going on

there at that unusual hour, she learned, that during her absence her room, which had since their removal been in some confusion, owing to Mrs Ellis not having decided what furniture should be placed there, had been subjected to a thorough spring cleaning. Alarmed at the idea of Mrs. Ellis having invaded her premises, she surveyed the apartment with a feeling of agitation, which, as she continued her observations, swelled into a storm of angry excitement

When Gertrude went from Mrs Sullivan's to Mr Graham's house in the city, she carried with her, besides a trunk containing her wardrobe, an old bandbox, which she stored away on the shelf of a closet in her chamber.

When the family went into the country, the box went also, carefully watched and protected by its owner As there was no closet in Gertrude's new room, she placed it in a corner behind the bed, and the evening before her expedition to the city had been engaged in removing a part of its contents. Each article was endeared to her by the charm of old association There was the figure of the Samuel, Uncle True's first gift, now defaced by time and accident. There, too, were his pipes, of common clay, and dark with smoke and age She had brought away, too, his lantern, for she had not forgotten its pleasant light, the first that ever fell upon the darkness of her life; nor could she leave behind an old fur cap, beneath which she had often sought a kindly smile There were some toys, too, and picture-books, gifts from Willie, a little basket he had carved for her from a nut, and a few other trifles.

All these things, excepting the lantern and cap, Gertrude had left upon the mantel-piece, and now, upon entering the room, her eye at once sought her treasures. They were gone. She ran towards the corner where she had left the old box That, too, was gone. To rush after the retreating housemaid, call her back, and pour forth a succession of eager enquiries, was but the work of an instant

Gertrude contrived to obtain from her all the information she needed The image, the pipes, and the lantern were thrown among a heap of broken glass and crockery, and, as Bridget declared, smashed all to nothing. The cap, pronounced moth-eaten, had been condemned to the flames, and the other articles, Bridget "belaved she was just afther laving them in the fire-place". And all this in strict accordance with Mrs Ellis's orders. Gertrude allowed Bridget to depart, unaware of the greatness of her loss; then, shutting the door, she threw herself upon the bed, and gave way to a violent fit of weeping.

"So this," thought she, "was the reason why Mrs. Ellis was so willing to forward my plans,—and I was foolish enough to believe it was for my own sake!"

She rose from the bed as suddenly as she had thrown herself down, and started for the door; then, some new thought seeming to check her, she returned again to the bedside, and, with a loud sob, fell upon her knees, and buried her face in her hands. Once or twice she lifted her head, and seemed on the point of rising and going to face her enemy. But each time something came across her mind and detained her. Whatever it might be, it was something that had, on the whole, a soothing influence; for, after every fresh struggle, she grew calmer, and presently rising, seated herself in a chair by the window, leaned her head on her hand, and looked out. The window was open, the shower was over, and the smiles of the refreshed and beautiful earth were reflected in a glowing rainbow, that spanned the eastern horizon. A wonderful composure stole into Gertrude's heart, and ere she had sat there many minutes, she felt "the grace that brings peace succeed to the passions that produce trouble". She had conquered, she had achieved the greatest of earth's victories, a victory over herself.

The sound of the tea-bell startled her. She hastened to bathe her face and brush her hair, and then went downstairs. There was no one in the dining-room but Mrs Ellis, Mr. Graham had been detained in town, and Emily was suffering with a severe headache. Consequently, Gertrude took tea alone with Mrs Ellis. The latter was conscious she had done an unkind thing, and as the injured party gave no evidence of anger or ill-will, not even mentioning the subject, the aggressor felt more uncomfortable and mortified than she would have been willing to allow.

This was the first instance of complete self-control in Gerty, and the last we shall have occasion to dwell upon. From this time she continued to experience more and more the power of governing herself, and, with each new effort gaining new strength, became at last a wonder to those who knew the temperament she had had to contend with. She was now nearly fourteen years old, and so rapid had been her recent growth that, instead of being below the usual stature, she was taller than most girls of her age.

Occasionally, she went to see her friend, Miss Patty Pace, and always met with a cordial reception. Miss Patty seemed to have a *great many* friends. Judging from the number of people that she talked about to Gertrude, the latter concluded she must be

acquainted with everybody in Boston. And it would have been hard to find anyone whose intercourse extended to a wider circle. She was prudent and conscientious, and though always peculiar in her habits and modes of expression, and so wild in some of her fancies as to be often thought by strangers a little *out*, she had secured and continued to retain the good-will of a great many kindly disposed ladies and gentlemen, at whose houses she was always well received and politely treated.

Miss Patty laboured under one great and absorbing regret, and frequently expatiated to Gertrude on the subject; it was, that she was without a companion. "Ah! Miss Gertrude," she would sometimes exclaim, seeming for the time quite forgetful of her age and infirmities, "I should do vastly well in this world, if I only had a companion;" and here, with a slight toss of the head, and a little smirking air, she would add, in a whisper, "and you must know, my dear, I somewhat meditate matrimony." Then, seeing Gertrude's look of surprise and amusement, she would add, "It is true, time is inexorable; but I cling to life, Miss Gertrude, I cling to life, and may marry yet."

CHAPTER XIX

THE NURSE

Mr. Graham's establishment was of the medium order, and little calculated to attract notice The garden was certainly very beautiful, abounding in rich shrubbery, summer-houses, and arbours covered with grape-vines; but a high broad-fence hid it from public view, and the house, standing back from the road, was rather old-fashioned and very unobtrusive in its appearance

The summer was passing away most happily, and Gertrude, in the constant enjoyment of Emily's society, and in the consciousness that she was, in various ways, rendering herself useful and important to this excellent friend, was finding in every day new causes of contentment and rejoicing, when a seal was suddenly set to all her pleasure.

Emily was taken ill with a fever, and Gertrude, on occasion of her first undertaking to enter the sick-room, and share in its duties, was rudely repulsed by Mrs. Ellis, who had constituted herself sole nurse, and who declared, when the poor girl pleaded

hard to be admitted, that the fever was catching, and Miss Emily did not want her there,—that when she was sick she never wanted anyone about her but herself.

For three or four days Gertrude wandered about the house inconsolable. On the fifth morning after her banishment from the room, she saw Mrs Prime going upstairs with some gruel; and, thrusting into her hands some rosebuds, which she had just gathered, she begged her to give them to Emily, and ask if she might not come in and see her.

But when the cook came down the flowers were still in her hand, and, as she threw them on the table, the kind-hearted woman gave vent to her feelings.

"I would not want to go there, Miss Gertrude; I wouldn't ensure you but what she'd bite your head off."

"Wouldn't Miss Emily take the flowers?" asked Gertrude.

"Well, she hadn't no word in the matter. Mrs. Ellis flung 'em outside the door, vowin' I might as well bring pison into the room with a fever, as them roses. I tried to speak to Miss Emily, but Mrs Ellis set up such a hush-sh-sh, I s'posed she was goin' to sleep, and jest made the best o' my way out"

Gertrude sauntered out into the garden She had nothing to do but think anxiously about Emily, who, she feared, was very ill Emily continued to grow worse, and a fortnight passed away without Gertrude's seeing her, or having any other intimation regarding her health than Mrs. Ellis's occasional report to Mr. Graham Once or twice she had ventured to question Mrs Ellis, whose only reply was, "Don't bother me with questions! what do you know about sickness?"

One afternoon Gertrude was sitting in a large summer-house at the lower end of the garden; her own piece of ground, fragrant with mignonette and verbena, was close by, and she was busily engaged in tying up, and marking some little papers of seeds, when she was startled by hearing a step close beside her, and looking up, saw Dr. Jeremy, the family physician, just entering the building.

"Ah! what are you doing?" exclaimed the doctor, in a quick, abrupt manner, peculiar to him "Sorting seeds, eh?"

"Yes, sir," replied Gerty, looking up and blushing, as she saw the doctor's keen black eyes scrutinizing her face

"Where have I seen you before?" asked he, in the same blunt way

"At Mr. Flint's"

"Ah! True Flint's I remember all about it You're his girl! Nice girl, too! And poor True, he's dead! Well, he's a loss to

the community! So this is the little nurse I used to see there. Bless me! how children do grow!"

"Doctor Jeremy," asked Gertrude, in an earnest voice, "will you please to tell me how Miss Emily is?"

"Emily! she an't very well, just now."

"Do you think she'll die?"

"Die! No! What should she die for? I won't let her die, if you'll help me keep her alive. Why an't you in the house, taking care of her?"

"I wish I might!" exclaimed Gertrude, starting up; "I wish I might!"

"What's to hinder?"

"Mrs Ellis, sir; she won't let me in; she says Miss Emily doesn't want anybody but her."

"She's nothing to say about it, or Emily either; it's my business, and I want you. I'd rather have you to take care of my patients than all the Mrs Ellises in the world. She doesn't know anything about nursing. So, mind, to-morrow you're to begin"

"O, thank you, doctor!"

"Don't thank me yet; wait till you've tried it—it's hard work taking care of sick folks. Whose orchard is that?"

"Mrs. Bruce's"

"Is that her pear-tree?"

"Yes, sir."

"By George, Mrs Bruce, I'll try your pears for you!"

As he spoke, the doctor, a man some sixty-five years of age, stout and active, sprung over a stone wall, which separated them from the orchard, and, carried along by the impetus the leap had given him, reached the foot of the tree almost at a bound.

As Gertrude, full of mirth, watched the proceeding, she observed the doctor stumble over some obstacle, and only save himself from falling by stretching forth both hands, and sustaining himself against the huge trunk of the fine old tree. At the same instant, a head, adorned with a velvet smoking-cap, was slowly lifted from the long grass, and a youth, about sixteen or seventeen years of age, raised himself upon his elbow, and stared at the unlooked for intruder.

Nothing daunted, the doctor at once assumed the offensive, saying, "Get up, lazy bones! What do you lie there for, tripping up honest folks?"

"Who do you call honest folks, sir?" enquired the youth.

"I call myself and my little friend here remarkably honest people," replied the doctor, winking at Gertrude, who, standing

behind the wall and looking over, was laughing heartily at the way in which the doctor had got caught.

The young man, observing the direction of the latter's eyes, turned and gave a broad stare at Gertrude's merry face.

"Can I do anything for you, sir?" asked he

"Yes, certainly," replied the doctor "I came here to help myself to pears, but you are taller than I—perhaps, with the help of that crooked-handled cane of yours, you can reach that best branch"

"A remarkably honourable and honest errand!" muttered the young man "I shall be happy to be engaged in so good a cause"

As he spoke, he lifted his cane, and, drawing down the end of the branch, so that he could reach it with his hand, shook it vigorously The ripe fruit fell on every side; and the doctor, having filled his pockets, and both his hands, started for the other side of the wall.

"Have you got enough?" asked the youth in a lazy tone of voice

"Plenty, plenty," said the doctor

"Glad of it," said the boy, indolently throwing himself on the grass, and still staring at Gertrude

"You must be very tired," said the doctor; "I'm a physician, and should advise a nap"

"Are you, indeed?" replied the youth, in the same tone of voice in which he had previously spoken, "then I think I'll take your advice," saying which he threw himself back upon the grass and closed his eyes

Having emptied his pockets upon the seat of the summer-house, and invited Gertrude to partake, the doctor, still laughing so immoderately at his boyish feat that he could scarcely eat the fruit, happened to bethink himself of the lateness of the hour. He looked at his watch. "Half-past four! The cars go in ten minutes Who's going to drive me to the depôt?"

"I don't know, sir," replied Gertrude

"Where's George?"

"He's gone to the meadow to get in some hay, but he left White Charlie harnessed in the yard, after he drove you up from the cars."

"Ah! then you can drive me down to the depôt"

"I can't, sir, I don't know how"

"But you must, I'll show you how. You're not afraid?"

"O, no, sir, but Mr. Graham——"

"Never you mind Mr Graham—you mind me I'll answer for your coming back safe enough"

Gertrude was naturally courageous; she had never driven before, but, having no fears, she succeeded admirably.

Dr. Jeremy was true to his promise of installing Gertrude in Emily's sick-room. The very next visit he made to his patient, he spoke in terms of the highest praise of Gertrude's devotion to her old uncle, and her capability as a nurse, and asked why she had been expelled from the chamber.

"She is timid," said Emily, "and is afraid of catching the fever."

"Don't believe it," said Dr. Jeremy, "'tan't like her"

"Do you think not?" enquired Emily, earnestly. "Mrs. Ellis——"

"Told a lie," interrupted the doctor. "Gerty wants to come and take care of you, and she knows how as well as Mrs Ellis any day. You want quiet, and that's what you can't have with that great talking woman about. So I'll send her to Jericho to-day, and bring my little Gertrude up here She's a quiet little mouse, and has got a head on her shoulders."

It is not to be supposed that Gertrude could provide for Emily's wants any better, or even as well, as Mrs. Ellis and Emily, knowing this, took care that the housekeeper should not be sent to Jericho, for though Dr. Jeremy, a man of strong prejudices, did not like her, she was excellent in her department, and could not be dispensed with

So, though Emily, Dr. Jeremy, and Gertrude were all made happy, by the free admission of the latter to the sick-room, the housekeeper was never conscious that anyone knew the wrong she had done to Gertrude in keeping her out of sight and giving a false reason for her continued absence.

There was a watchfulness, a care, a tenderness in Gertrude, which only the warmest love could have dictated

When Emily awoke at night from a troubled sleep, found a cooling draught ready at her lips, and knew from Mrs. Ellis's deep snoring that it was not her hand that held it—when she observed that all day long no troublesome fly was ever permitted to approach her pillow, her aching head was relieved by hours of patient bathing, and the little feet that were never weary were always noiseless—she realized the truth that Dr Jeremy had brought her a most excellent medicine.

A week or two passed away, and she was well enough to sit up nearly all the time. A few weeks more, and the doctor began to insist upon air and exercise. "Drive out two or three times every day," said he

"How can I?" said Emily. "George has so much to do, it will be very inconvenient"

she always had as a child; so we will acquit her of any coquettish desire to display an unusually fine head of hair.

Gertrude's eyes have retained their old lustre, and do not now look too large for her face; and if her mouth be less classically formed than the strict rule of beauty would commend, one can easily forgive that, in consideration of two rows of small pearly teeth, which are as regular and even as a string of beads Her neat dress of spotted muslin fits close to her throat, and her simple black mantle does not conceal the roundness of her taper waist

What, then? Is Gertrude a beauty?

By no means. Hers is a face and form about which there would be a thousand different opinions, and out of the whole number few would pronounce her beautiful. But there are faces whose ever-varying expression one loves to watch—tell-tale faces, that speak the truth and proclaim the sentiment within; faces that now light up with intelligence, now beam with mirth, now sadden at the tale of sorrow, now burn with a holy indignation for that which the soul abhors, and now, again, are sanctified by the divine presence, when the heart turns away from the world and itself, and looks upward in the spirit of devotion. Such a face was Gertrude's

Whatever charm these attractions might give her—and there were those who estimated it highly—it was undoubtedly greatly enchanced by an utter unconsciousness, on her part, of possessing any attractions at all. The early ingrafted belief in her own personal plainness had not yet deserted her; but she no longer felt the mortification she had formerly laboured under on that account.

As she perceived Miss Graham coming to meet her, she quickened her pace, and joining her near the door-step, where a path, turning to the right, led into the garden, passed her arm affectionately over Emily's shoulder, in a manner which the latter's blindness, and Gertrude's superior height and ability to act as guide, had of late rendered usual, and, turning into the walk which led from the house, said, while she drew the shawl closer around her blind friend—

"Here I am again, Emily! Have you been alone ever since I went away?"

"Yes, dear, most of the time, and have been quite worried to think you were travelling about in Boston this excessively warm day."

"It has not hurt me in the least; I only enjoy this cool breeze all the more; it is such a contrast to the heat and dust of the city!"

"But, Gerty," said Emily, stopping short in their walk, "what

are you coming away from the house for? You have not been to tea, my child"

"I know it, Emily, but I don't want any supper."

They walked on for some time, slowly and in perfect silence. At last Emily said—

"Well, Gertrude, have you nothing to tell me?"

"O, yes, a great deal, but——"

"But you know it will be sad news to me, and so you don't like to speak it; is it not so?"

"I ought not to have the vanity, dear Emily, to think it would trouble you very much, but ever since last evening, when I told you what Mr. W—— said, and what I had in my mind, and you seemed to feel so badly at the thought of our being separated, I have felt almost doubtful what it was right for me to do."

"And I, on the other hand, Gertrude, have been reproaching myself for allowing you to have any knowledge of my feeling in the matter, lest I should be influencing you against your duty, or, at least, making it harder for you to fulfil I feel that you are right, Gertrude, and that, instead of opposing, I ought to do everything I can to forward your plans."

"Dear Emily!" exclaimed Gertrude, vehemently, "if you thought so from what I told you yesterday, you would be convinced, had you seen and heard all that I have to-day!"

"Why? Are matters any worse than they were at Mrs Sullivan's?"

"Much worse than I described to you. I did not then know myself all that Mrs Sullivan had to contend with, but I have been at their house nearly all the time since I left home this morning (for Mr W—— did not detain me five minutes), and it really does not seem to me safe for such a timid, delicate woman as Mrs Sullivan to be alone with Mr Cooper, now that his mind is in such a dreadful state"

"But do you think you can do any good, Gertrude?"

"I know I can, dear Emily, I can manage him much better than she can, and at the same time do more for his comfort and happiness He is like a child now, and full of whims When he can possibly be indulged, Mrs Sullivan will please him at any amount of inconvenience, and even danger, to herself; not only because he is her father, and she feels it her duty, but I actually think she is afraid of him, he is so irritable and violent She tells me he often takes it into his head to do the strangest things—such as going out late at night, when it would be perfectly unsafe; and sleeping with his window wide open, though his room is on the lower floor."

"Poor woman!" exclaimed Emily. "What does she do in such cases?"

"I can tell you, Emily, for I saw an instance of it to-day When I first went in this morning, he was preparing to make a coal-fire in the grate, notwithstanding the heat!"

"And Mrs. Sullivan?" said Emily.

"Was sitting on the lower stair in the front entry, crying."

"Poor thing!" murmured Emily.

"She could do nothing with him," continued Gertrude, "and had given up in despair."

"She ought to have a strong woman, or a man, to take care of him."

"That is what she dreads more than anything. She says it would kill her to see him unkindly treated, as he would be sure to be by a stranger; and, besides, I can see that she shrinks from the idea of having anyone in the house to whom she is unaccustomed. She is exceedingly neat and particular in all her arrangements, and declares she would sooner admit a wild beast into her family than an Irish girl."

"Her new house has not been a source of much pleasure to her yet, has it?"

"O, no! She was saying to-day how strange it seemed, when she had been looking forward so long to the comfort of a new and well-built tenement, that, just as she had moved in and got everything furnished to her mind, she should have this great trial come upon her."

"It seems strange to me," said Emily, "that she did not sooner perceive its approach. I noticed when I went with you to the house in E—— Street, the failure in the old man's intellect."

"I had observed it for a long time," remarked Gertrude, "but never spoke of it to her, and I do not think she was in the least aware of it, until about the time of their removal, when the breaking-up of old associations had a sad effect upon poor Mr. Cooper."

"Don't you think, Gertrude, that the pulling down of the church, and his consequent loss of employment, were a great injury to his mind?"

"I am sure of it, he altered very much after that, and never seemed so happy, even while they were in the house in E—— Street; and when the owners of that land gave Mrs Sullivan notice that she would be obliged to leave, the old sexton's mind gave way entirely."

"Sad thing!" said Emily. "How old is he, Gertrude?"

"I don't know exactly, but I believe he is very old; I re-

member Mrs. Sullivan telling me, some time ago, that he was near eighty."

"Is he so old as that? Then I am not surprised that these changes have made him childish"

"O, no! Melancholy as it is, it is no more than we may any of us come to, if we live to his age; and as he seems, for the most part, full as contented and happy as I have ever seen him appear, I do not lament it so much on his own account as on Mrs Sullivan's But I do, Emily, feel dreadfully anxious about *her*"

"Does it seem to be so very hard for her to bear up under it?"

"I think it would not be if she were well; but there is something the matter with her, and I fear it is more serious than she allows, for she looks very pale, and has, I know, had several alarming ill turns lately."

"Has she consulted a physician?"

"No; she doesn't wish for one, and insists upon it she shall soon be better; but I do not feel sure that she will, especially as she takes no care of herself, and that is one great reason for my wishing to be in town as soon as possible. I am anxious to have Dr. Jeremy see her, and I think I can bring it about without her knowing that he comes on her account I'll have a severe cold myself, if I can't manage it in any other way"

"You speak confidently of being in town, Gertrude; so I suppose it is all arranged"

"O, I have not told you, have I, about my visit to Mr. W——? Dear, good man, how grateful I ought to be to him! He has promised me the situation"

"I had no doubt he would, from what you told me he said to you at Mrs. Bruce's"

"You hadn't, really! Why, Emily, I was almost afraid to mention it to him I couldn't believe he would have sufficient confidence in me, but he was so kind! I hardly dare tell you what he said about my capacity to teach, you will think me so vain."

"You need not tell me, my darling; I know from his own lips how highly he appreciates your ability; you could not tell me anything so flattering as what he told me himself"

"Dear Uncle True always wanted me to be a teacher; it was the height of his ambition. He would be pleased, wouldn't he, dear Emily?"

"He would, no doubt, have been proud enough to see you assistant in a school like Mr. W——'s I am not sure, however, but he would think, as I do, that you are undertaking too much. You expect to be occupied in the school the greater part of every

morning, and yet you propose to establish yourself as nurse to Mrs Sullivan, and guardian to her poor old father. My dear child, you are not used to so much care, and I shall be constantly troubled for you, lest your own health and strength give way"

"O, dear Emily, there is no occasion for any anxiety on my account! I am well and strong, and fully capable of all that I have planned for myself. My only dread is in the thought of leaving you. and the only fear I have is, that you will miss me and perhaps feel as if——"

"I know what you would say, Gertrude You need not fear that, I am sure of your affection. I am confident you love me next to your duty, and I would not for the world that you should give me the preference I only wish, my dear, that for the present you had not thought of entering the school You might then have gone to Mrs Sullivan's, stayed as long as you were needed, and perhaps found, by the time we are ready to start on our southern tour, that your services could be quite dispensed with, in which case you could accompany us on a journey which I am sure your health will by that time require"

"But, dear Emily, how could I do that? I could not propose myself as a visitor to Mrs Sullivan, however useful I might intend to be to her, nor could I speak of nursing to a woman who will not acknowledge that she is ill I thought of all that, and it seemed to me impossible, with all the delicacy and tact in the world, to bring it about; for I have been with you so long that Mrs. Sullivan, I have no doubt, thinks me entirely unfitted for her primitive way of life. It was only when Mr W—— spoke of his wanting an assistant, and, as I imagined, hinted that he should like to employ me in that capacity, that the present plan occurred to me I knew, if I told Mrs Sullivan that I was engaged to teach there, and that you were not coming to town at all, but were soon going South, and represented to her that I wanted a boarding-place for the winter, she would not only be loth to refuse me a home with her, but would insist that I should go nowhere else"

"And it proved as you expected?"

"Exactly, and she showed so much pleasure at the thought of my being with her, that I realized still more how much she needed someone"

"She will have a treasure in you, Gertrude"

"She looked so happy when I came away to-night, and spoke so hopefully of the comfort it would be during the winter to have me with her, that I felt repaid for any sacrifice it has been to me.

But when I came home, and saw you, and thought of your going so far away, and of the length of time it might be before I should live with you again, I felt as if——"

Gertrude could say no more. She laid her head on Emily's shoulder, and wept.

Emily soothed her with the greatest tenderness.

"We have been very happy together, Gerty," said she, "and I shall miss you sadly. But I never loved you half so well as I do now, at the very time that we must part; for I see in the sacrifice you are making of yourself one of the noblest traits of character a woman can possess Your leaving us at this time, and renouncing, without a murmur, the southern tour from which you expected so much pleasure, proves that my Gerty is the brave, good girl I always hoped and prayed she might become."

As Emily finished speaking, they reached a corner of the garden, and were met by a servant-girl, who announced that Mrs. Bruce and her son were in the parlour, and had asked for them both.

"I will return to the house with Katy," said Emily, "and you can go in at the side-door, and reach your own room without being seen. I will excuse you to Mrs. Bruce for the present; and when you have bathed your eyes, and feel composed, you can come in."

CHAPTER XXI

FRUSTRATED PLANS

When Gertrude entered the room half an hour afterwards, there was no evidence in her appearance of any unusual distress of mind Mrs. Bruce nodded to her good-naturedly from a corner of the sofa Mr. Bruce rose and offered his chair, at the same time Mr. Graham pointed to a vacant window-seat near him, and said, kindly:

"Here is a place for you, Gertrude"

Declining, however, the civilities of both gentlemen, she withdrew to an ottoman which stood near an open glass-door, where she was almost immediately joined by Mr. Bruce, who, seating himself in an indolent attitude upon the upper row of a flight of steps which led from the window to the garden, commenced conversation with her.

Mr Bruce—the same gentleman who, some years before, took afternoon naps in the grass—had recently returned from Europe,

and, glorying in a moustache, and the possession of a handsome property, now viewed himself with more complacency than ever.

"So you've been in Boston all day, Miss Flint?"

"Yes, nearly all day."

"Didn't you find it distressingly warm?"

"Somewhat so."

"I tried to go in to attend to some business that mother was anxious about, and even went down to the depôt; but I had to give it up."

"Were you overpowered by the heat?"

"I was"

"How unfortunate!" remarked Gertrude, in a half-compassionate, half-ironical tone of voice

Mr. Bruce looked up, to judge, if possible, from her countenance, whether she were serious or not; but, there being little light in the room, he could not decide the question in his mind, and therefore replied:

"I dislike the heat, Miss Gertrude, and why should I expose myself to it unnecessarily?"

"O, I beg pardon; I thought you spoke of important business"

"Only some affair of my mother's. Nothing I felt any interest in, and she took the state of the weather for an excuse If I had known that you were in the cars, as I have since heard, I should certainly have persevered, in order to have the pleasure of walking down Washington Street with you."

"I did not go down Washington Street"

"But you would have done so with a suitable escort," suggested the young man

"If I had gone out of my way for the sake of accompanying my escort, the escort would have been a very doubtful advantage," said Gertrude, laughing

"How very practical you are, Miss Gertrude! Do you mean to say that, when you go to the city, you always have a settled plan of operations, and never swerve from your course?"

"By no means I trust I am not difficult to influence when there is a sufficient motive."

The young man bit his lip

"Well, then, to ask a serious question—where were you this morning?"

"At what hour?"

"Half-past seven."

"On my way to Boston, in the cars."

"Is it possible?—so early! Why, I thought you went at ten. Then, all the time I was watching by the garden wall to get a

chance to say good-morning, you were half a dozen miles away. I wish I had not wasted that hour so; I might have spent it in sleeping."

"Very true, it is a great pity."

"And then half an hour more here this evening! How came you to keep me waiting so long?"

"I?—When?"

"Why, now—to-night."

"I was not aware of doing so. I certainly did not take your visit to myself."

"My visit certainly was not meant for anyone else"

"Ben," said Mr Graham, approaching rather abruptly, "are you fond of gardening? I thought I heard you just now speaking of roses."

"Yes, sir; Miss Flint and I were having quite a discussion upon flowers—roses especially"

Gertrude, availing herself of Mr. Graham's approach, tried to make her escape and join the ladies at the sofa; but Mr. Bruce saw her intention, and frustrated it by placing himself in the way, so that she could not pass him without positive rudeness. Mr. Graham continued—"I propose placing a small fountain in the vicinity of Miss Flint's flower-garden; won't you walk down with me, and give your opinion of my plan?"

"Isn't it too dark, sir, to——"

"*No, no, not at all*; there is ample light for our purpose. This way, if you please;" and Mr. Bruce was compelled to follow where Mr Graham led.

Gertrude now related to Mrs Bruce the results of some shopping which she had undertaken on her account. The gentlemen, soon returning, took seats near the sofa, and the conversation became general

"Mr. Graham," said Mrs. Bruce, "I have been questioning Emily about your visit to the South; and, from the route which she tells me you propose taking, I think it will be a charming trip"

"I hope so; it will be an excellent thing for Emily, and as Gertrude has never travelled at all, I anticipate a great deal of pleasure for her."

"Ah! then you are to be of the party, Miss Flint?"

"Of course," answered Mr. Graham, without giving Gertrude a chance to speak for herself, "we couldn't get along at all without her"

"It will be delightful for you," continued Mrs Bruce, her eyes still fixed on Gertrude.

"I did expect to go with Mr. and Miss Graham," answered Gertrude, "and looked forward to the journey with the greatest eagerness; but I have just decided that I must remain in Boston this winter."

"What are you talking about, Gertrude?" asked Mr. Graham. "This is all news to me."

"And to me, too, sir, or I should have informed you of it before. I suppose you expected me to accompany you, and I should have told you before of the circumstances that now make it impossible; but they are of quite recent occurrence."

"But we can't give you up, Gertrude; you must go with us in spite of circumstances."

"I fear I shall not be able," said Gertrude, smiling. "You're very kind, sir, to wish it."

"Wish it!—I tell you I insist upon it. You are under my care, child, and I have a right to say what you shall do."

Mrs Bruce, perceiving that a family storm was brewing, wisely rose to go. Mr Graham suspended his wrath until she and her son had taken leave, but, as soon as the door was closed upon them, burst forth with real anger.

"Now, tell me what all this means. Here I make all my arrangements, on purpose to be able to give up this winter to travelling—and that, not so much on my own account as to give pleasure to both of you, and, just as everything is settled, and we are almost on the point of starting, Gertrude announces that she has concluded not to go. Now, I should like to know her reasons."

Emily undertook to explain Gertrude's motives, and ended by expressing her own approbation of her course. As soon as she had finished, Mr. Graham, who had listened very impatiently, burst forth with redoubled indignation.

"So Gerty prefers the Sullivans to us, and you seem to encourage her in it! I should like to know what they have ever done for her, compared with what I have done!"

"They have been friends of hers for years, and now that they are in great distress, she does not feel as if she could leave them, and I confess I do not wonder at her decision."

"I must say I do. She prefers to make a slave of herself in Mr. W——'s school, and a still greater slave in Mrs Sullivan's family, instead of staying with us, where she has always been treated like one of my own family."

"O, Mr. Graham!" said Gertrude, earnestly, "it is not a matter of preference or choice, except as I feel it to be a duty."

"And what makes it a duty? Just because you used to live in the same house with them, you think you must forfeit your own interests to take care of them when sick! I can't say that I see how their claim compares with mine. Haven't I given you the best of educations, and spared no expense either for your improvement or your happiness?"

"I did not think, sir," answered Gertrude, humbly, and yet with quiet dignity, "of counting up the favours I had received, and measuring my conduct accordingly. In that case, my obligations to you are immense, and you would certainly have the greatest claim upon my services."

"Father," said Emily, "I thought the object, in giving Gertrude a good education, was to make her independent of all the world, and not simply dependent upon us"

"Emily," said Mr Graham, "I tell you it is a matter of feeling—you don't seem to look upon the thing in the light I do; but you are both against me, and I won't talk any more about it"

So saying, Mr Graham took a lamp, went to his study, and was seen no more that night.

CHAPTER XXII

SELFISHNESS

During the long hours of a wakeful and restless night, Gertrude had ample time to review her situation and circumstances. At first her only emotion was one of grief and distress, such as a child might feel on being reproved, but that gradually subsided, as other and bitter thoughts rose up in her mind. "What right," thought she, "has Mr. Graham to treat me thus—to tell me I *shall* go with them on this journey, and speak as if my other friends were ciphers in his estimation, and ought to be in my own? Does he consider that my freedom is to be the price of my education? Emily does not think so, Emily, who loves and needs me a thousand times more than Mr. Graham, thinks I have acted rightly. And my solemn promise to Willie; is that to be held for nothing? No," thought she, "it would be tyranny in Mr. Graham to insist upon my remaining with them, and I am glad I have resolved to break away from such thraldom Besides, I was educated to teach, and Mr. W—— says it is important to commence at once, while my studies are fresh in

my mind. Perhaps, if I yielded now, and stayed here living in luxury, I should continue to do so until I lost the power of regaining my independence."

So much said pride; and Gertrude's heart, naturally proud, and only kept in check by strict and conscientious self-control, listened awhile to such suggestions. But milder thoughts soon took the place of these excited and angry feelings.

"Perhaps," said she to herself, "it is, after all, pure kindness to me that prompted Mr. Graham's interference. It is impossible for him to know how strong my motives are, how deep I consider my obligations to the Sullivans, and how much I am needed by them at this time. I had no idea, either, that it was such an understood thing that I was to be of the party to the South. I do not wonder at his being somewhat annoyed He probably feels, too, as if I had been under his guardianship so long that he has almost a right to decide upon my conduct. And he *has* been very indulgent to me—and I a stranger with no claims! O! I hate to have him think me so ungrateful!

"Shall I then decide to give up my teaching, go to the South, and leave dear Mrs Sullivan to suffer while I am away? No, that is impossible. I will never be such a traitor to my own heart, and my sense of right, sorry as I shall be to offend Mr. Graham."

Having thus resolved to brave the tempest that she well knew she must encounter, and committed her cause to Him who judgeth righteously, Gertrude tried to compose herself to sleep, but found it impossible to obtain any untroubled rest She at length, therefore, gave up the attempt, and, rising, seated herself at the window, where, watching the approach of dawn, she found, in quiet self-communing, the strength and courage which, she felt, would be requisite to carry her calmly and firmly through the following day—a day destined to witness her sad separation from Emily, and her farewell to Mr. Graham, which would probably be of a still more distressing character.

Gertrude's heart almost failed her when she stood half an hour before breakfast-time, with the handle of the dining-room door in her hand, summoning all her energies for another meeting with the formidable opposer of her plans She paused but a moment, however, then opened the door and went in. Mr Graham was where she expected to see him, sitting in his arm-chair, and on the breakfast-table by his side lay the morning paper. It had been Gertrude's habit, for a year or two, to read that paper aloud to the old gentleman at this same hour, and it was for that very purpose she had now come.

She advanced towards him with her usual "good-morning".
The salutation was returned in a purposely constrained voice. She seated herself, and leaned forward to take the newspaper; but he placed his hand upon it, and prevented her.

"I do not wish to have you read, or do anything else for me," he said, "until I know whether you have concluded to treat me with the respect I have a right to demand from you."

"I certainly never intended to treat you otherwise than with respect, Mr Graham"

"When girls or boys set themselves up in opposition to those older and wiser than themselves, they manifest the greatest disrespect they are capable of, but I am willing to forgive the past, if you assure me, as I think you will, after a night's reflection, that you have returned to a right sense of your duty."

"I cannot say, sir, that I have changed my views with regard to what that duty is."

"Do you mean to tell me," asked Mr Graham, rising from his chair, and speaking in a tone which made Gerty's heart quake, "do you mean to tell me that you have any idea of persisting in your folly?"

"Is it folly, sir, to do right?"

"Right! There is a great difference of opinion between you and me as to what right is in this case."

"But, Mr. Graham, I think if you knew all the circumstances, you would not blame my conduct I have told Emily the reasons that influenced me, and she——"

"Don't quote Emily to me!" interrupted Mr. Graham. "I don't doubt she'd give her head to anybody that asked for it; but I hope I know a little better what is due to myself; and I tell you plainly, Miss Gertrude Flint, without any more words in the matter, that if you leave my house, as you propose doing, you leave it with my displeasure; and *that*, you may find one of these days, it is no light thing to have incurred,—unnecessarily, too," he muttered, "as you are doing"

"I am very sorry to displease you, Mr. Graham, but——"

"No, you're not *sorry*; if you were, you would not walk straight in the face of my wishes," said Mr Graham. "But I have said enough about a matter which is not worthy of so much notice You can go or stay as you please. I wish you to understand, however, that, in the former case, I utterly withdraw my protection and assistance from you You must take care of yourself, or trust to strangers."

"Mr. Graham," said Gertrude proudly, "it is my desire to earn a maintenance for myself."

"A heroic resolve!" said Mr. Graham, contemptuously, "and pronounced with a dignity I hope you will be able to maintain. Am I to consider, then, that your mind is made up?"

"It is, sir," said Gertrude.

"And you go?"

"I must I believe it to be my duty, and am therefore willing to sacrifice my own comfort, and, what I assure you I value far more, your friendship."

Mr. Graham did not seem to take the least notice of the latter part of her remark, and before she had finished speaking drowned her voice in the violent ringing of the table-bell

It was answered by Katy with the breakfast: and Emily and Mrs Ellis coming in at the same moment, the meal was commenced in unusual silence and constraint—for Emily had heard the loud tones of her father's voice, and was filled with anxiety and alarm, while Mrs Ellis plainly saw that something unpleasant had occurred

When Mr. Graham had finished eating a hearty breakfast, he turned to Mrs Ellis, and formally invited her to accompany himself and Emily on their journey to the South

Mrs Ellis, who had never before heard any intimation that such a tour was contemplated, accepted the invitation with pleasure; while Emily hid her agitated face behind her tea-cup.

Breakfast over, Emily hastily sought her room, where she was joined by Gertrude

In answering Emily's enquiries as to the scene which had taken place, Gertrude forbore to repeat Mr. Graham's bitter and wounding remarks, for she saw, from her kind friend's pained and anxious countenance, how deeply she participated in her own sense of wrong and misapprehension. She told her, however, that it was now well understood by Mr. Graham that she was to leave, and, as his sentiments towards her were far from kindly, she thought it best to go at once. Emily saw the reasonableness of the proposal, assented to it, and agreed to accompany her to town that very afternoon.

The remainder of the day, therefore, was spent by Gertrude in packing, and other preparations; while Emily sat by, counselling and advising the future conduct of her adopted darling, and lamenting the necessity for their separation.

"O! if you could only write to me, dear Emily, during your long absence, what a comfort it would be!" exclaimed Gertrude

"With Mrs Ellis's assistance, my dear," replied Emily, "I will send you such news as I can of our movements; but, though you may not be able to hear much from me, you will be ever in my

thoughts, and I shall never forget to commend my beloved child to the protection and care of One who will be to her a better counsellor and friend than I can be."

Before leaving the house, Gertrude sought Mr. Graham's study in hopes that he would take a friendly leave of her; but on her telling him that she had come to bid him "good-bye", he indistinctly repeated those simple words, and, turning his back upon her, took up the tongs to mend his fire

So she went away, with a tear in her eye and sadness in her heart, for until now Mr Graham had been a good friend to her.

CHAPTER XXIII

A FRIEND IN AFFLICTION

Passing over Gertrude's parting with Emily, her cordial reception by Mrs. Sullivan, and her commencement of school duties, we will look in upon her, and record the events of a day in November, about two months after she left Mr. Graham's.

Rising with the sun, she made her neat toilet in a room so cold, that before it was completed her hands were half benumbed; nor did she, in spite of the chilling atmosphere, omit, ere she commenced the labours of the day, to supplicate Heaven's blessing upon them. Then, noiselessly entering the adjoining apartment, where Mrs. Sullivan was still sleeping, she lit a fire—the materials for which had been carefully prepared the night before—in a small grate; and, descending the stairs with the same light footstep, performed a similar service at the cooking-stove, which stood in a comfortable room where, now that the weather was cold, the family took their meals The table was set, and the preparations for breakfast nearly completed, when Mrs Sullivan entered, pale, thin, and feeble in her appearance, and wrapped in a large shawl

"Gertrude," said she, "why will you let me sleep so late, while you are up and at work? I believe it has happened so every day this week!"

"For the very best reason in the world, auntie; because I sleep all the early part of the night, and am wide awake at daybreak, and with you it is just the reverse Besides, I like to get ready the breakfast."

Mrs Sullivan smiled at her cheerfulness

"Now," said Gertrude, playfully, as she drew a comfortable

chair close to the fire, "I want you to sit down here and watch the tea-kettle boil, while I run and see if Mr. Cooper is ready to let me tie up his cue."

She went, and presently returning with the old man, she placed a chair for him, and having waited, as for a child, while he seated himself, and then pinned a napkin about his throat, she proceeded to place the breakfast on the table.

Breakfast over, there were dishes to wash, rooms to be put in order, dinner to be decided on and partially prepared, and all this Gertrude accomplished, chiefly through her own labour, before she went to rearrange her dress, previous to her departure for the school, where she had now been some weeks installed as assistant teacher. A quarter before nine she started off to school, taking Mr Cooper with her, and leaving him at the new church they were building near the one he had formerly been sexton of, in charge of Miller, one of the workmen.

Of Gertrude's school-duties we shall say nothing save that she was found by Mr. W—— fully competent to the performance of them, and that she met with those trials and discouragements only to which all teachers are more or less subjected, from the idleness, obstinacy, or stupidity of their pupils On this day, however, she was, from various causes, detained to a later hour than usual, and the clock struck two at the very moment that she was ringing Dr. Jeremy's door-bell The girl who opened the door knew Gertrude by sight, having often seen her at her master's house, and, telling her that, though the doctor was just going to dinner, she thought he would see her, asked her into the office where he stood, with his back at the fire, eating an apple, as it was his invariable custom to do before dinner.

He laid it down, however, and advancing to meet Gertrude, held out both his hands "Gertrude Flint, I declare!" exclaimed he. "Why, I'm glad to see you. Why haven't you been here before, I should like to know?"

Gertrude explained that she was living with friends, one of whom was very old, the other an invalid; and that so much of her time was occupied in school that she had no opportunity for visiting

"Poor excuse!" said the doctor. "But, now we've got you here, we sha'n't let you go very soon!" and going to the foot of the staircase, he called in a loud tone of voice, "Mrs Jerry! come! come down to dinner as quick as you can, and put on your best cap—we've got company.—Poor soul!" added he, in a lower tone, addressing himself to Gertrude, and smiling good-naturedly, "she can't hurry, can she, Gerty?—she's fat."



M 20

"THE FIGURE SUDDENLY RAISED ITSELF AND UTTERED A PIERCING SHRIEK!"

Gertrude now protested against staying to dinner, declaring she must hasten home, and announcing Mrs. Sullivan's illness, and the object of her visit.

"An hour can't make much difference in such a case," insisted the doctor. "You must stay and dine with me, and then I'll go wherever you wish, and take you with me in the buggy."

Gertrude hesitated; the sky had clouded over, and a few flakes of snow were falling; she should have an uncomfortable walk; and, moreover, it would be better for her to accompany the doctor, as the street in which she lived was principally composed of new houses, not yet numbered, and he might, if he were alone, have some difficulty in finding the right tenement

At this stage of her reflections, Mrs Jeremy entered. Fat she certainly was, very uncommonly fat, and flushed, too, with her unwonted haste, and the excitement of anticipating the company of a stranger She kissed Gertrude in the kindest manner, and then, looking round and seeing that there was no one else present, exclaimed, glancing reproachfully at the doctor—

"Why, Dr Jerry!—an't you ashamed of yourself? I never will believe you again; you made me think there was some great stranger here"

"And pray, Mrs. Jerry, who's a greater stranger in this house than Gerty Flint?"

"Sure enough!" said Mrs Jeremy, "Gertrude *is* a stranger, and I've got a scolding in store for her on that very account; but, you know, Dr. Jerry, I shouldn't have put on my lilac-and-pink for Gertrude to see But come, Gerty," continued that lady, "dinner's ready; take off your cloak and bonnet; the doctor has got a great deal to say, and has been wanting dreadfully to see you."

They had been sitting some minutes without a word having been spoken, beyond the usual civilities of the table, when the doctor, suddenly laying down his knife and fork, commenced laughing, and laughed till the tears came into his eyes. Gertrude looked at him enquiringly, and Mrs Jeremy said, "There, Gertrude!—for one whole week he had just such a laughing-fit, two or three times a day, and, I confess, I don't understand now what could have happened between him and Mr. Graham that was so very funny."

"Come, wife," said the doctor, checking himself in his merriment, "don't you forestall my communication I want to tell the story myself. I don't suppose," continued he, turning towards Gertrude, "you've lived five years at Mr Graham's without finding out what a cantankerous, obstinate old hulk he is!"

"Doctor!" said Mrs. Jeremy, reprovingly.

"I don't care for winking or head-shaking, wife; I speak my mind, and that's the conclusion I've come to with regard to Graham, and Gertrude, here, has done the same, I haven't a particle of doubt, only she's a good girl, and won't say so."

"I never saw anything that looked like it," said Mrs. Jeremy, "and I've seen as much of him as most folks. I meet him in the street almost every day, and he looks as smiling as a basket of chips, and makes a beautiful bow."

"I dare say," said the doctor; "Gertrude and I know what gentlemanly manners he has when one does not walk in the very teeth of his opinions—eh, Gertrude?—but when one does——"

"In talking politics, for instance," suggested Mrs Jeremy. "It's your differences with him on politics that have set you against him so"

"No, it isn't," replied the doctor. "A man may get angry talking politics, and be a pretty good-natured man, too, in the main, but that isn't the sort of thing I have reference to at all It's Graham's wanting to lay down the law to everybody that comes within ten miles of him that I can't endure I thought he'd improved of late years; he had a serious lesson enough in that sad affair of poor Philip Amory's; but, fact, I believe he's been trying the old game again Ha! ha! ha!" shouted the good doctor, leaning forward, and giving Gertrude a light tap on the shoulder—"wasn't I glad when I found he'd met at last with a reasonable opposition!—and that, too, where he least expected it!"

Gertrude looked her astonishment at his evident knowledge of the misunderstanding between herself and Mr Graham; and in answer to that look, he continued, "You wonder where I picked up my information It was partly from Graham himself; and what diverts me is to think how hard the old chap tried to hide his defeat"

"Dr. Jeremy," interposed Gertrude, "I hope you don't think——"

"No, my dear, I *don't* think you a *professed pugilist*, but I consider you a girl of sense—one who knows what's right—and will do what's right, in spite of Mr Graham, or anybody else."

It was by this time beginning to snow fast, and Gertrude's anxiety to return home in good season being very manifest to her kind host and hostess, they urged no further delay, and, after she had given many a promise to repeat her visit on the earliest opportunity, she drove away with the doctor.

CHAPTER XXIV

CARES MULTIPLIED

"I have been thinking," said Gertrude, as she drew near home, "how we will manage, doctor, so as not to alarm Mrs. Sullivan."

"What's going to alarm her?" asked the doctor.

"You, if she knows at once that you are a physician. I think I had better introduce you as a friend who brought me home in the storm"

"O! so we are going to act a little farce, are we? I'm ready. What shall I say first?"

"I leave that to a wiser head than mine, doctor, and trust entirely to your own discretion to obtain some knowledge of her symptoms, and only gradually disclose to her that you are a physician"

"Ah, yes; pretend to be only an individual of an enquiring mind I think I can manage it."

They went in. As they opened the door, Mrs Sullivan rose from her chair with a troubled countenance, and hardly waited for the introduction to Gertrude's friend before she turned to her and asked with some anxiety if Mr. Cooper were not with them

"No," replied Gertrude "Hasn't he come home?"

Upon Mrs. Sullivan's saying that she had not seen him since morning, Gertrude informed her, with a composure she was far from feeling, that Mr. Miller had undertaken the care of him, and could, undoubtedly, account for his absence. She would seek him at once.

"O, I'm so sorry," said Mrs Sullivan, "that you should have to go out again in such a storm; but I feel very anxious"

"There's no need to be; I think he's safe in the church But I'll go for him at once, you know I never mind the weather"

"Then take my great shawl, dear" And Mrs Sullivan went to the entry-closet for her shawl, giving Gertrude an opportunity to beg of Dr Jeremy that he would await her return; for she knew that any unusual agitation of mind would often occasion an attack of faintness in Mrs. Sullivan, and was afraid to have her left alone.

It was already growing dark. Gertrude hastened along the wet footpath, exposed to the blinding storm, and after passing through several streets, gained the church. She went into the building,

and met Miller coming from the gallery. He looked surprised at seeing her, and asked if Mr. Cooper had not returned home. She answered in the negative, and he then informed her that he had not been able to persuade the old man to go home at dinner-time, and that he had therefore taken him to his own house; he had supposed, however, that long before this hour one of the children would have accompanied him to Mrs Sullivan's.

As it now seemed probable that he was still at Mr. Miller's, Gertrude took the direction, and proceeded thither at once. After another uncomfortable walk, and some difficulty in finding the right place, she reached her destination. She knocked at the door, but there was no response, and after waiting a moment, she opened it and went in. A band of startled children dispersed at the sight of a stranger, and ensconced themselves in corners; and Mrs Miller, in dismay at the untidy appearance of her kitchen, hastily pushed back a clothes-horse against the wall, thereby disclosing to view the very person Gertrude had come to seek, who, in his usual desponding attitude, sat cowering over the fire. But before she could advance to speak to him, her whole attention was arrested by another and most unexpected sight. Placed against the side of the room, directly opposite the door, was a narrow bed, in which some person seemed to be sleeping. Hardly, however, had Gerty presented herself in the doorway before the figure suddenly raised itself, gazed fixedly at her, lifted a hand as if to ward off her approach, and uttered a piercing shriek!

The voice and countenance were not to be mistaken, and Gertrude, pale and trembling, felt something like a revival of her old dread, as she beheld the well-known features of Nan Grant.

"Go away! go *away*!" cried Nan, as Gertrude, after a moment's hesitation, advanced into the room. Again Gertrude paused, for the wildness of Nan's eyes and her excitement were such, that she feared to excite her further.

Mrs Miller now came forward and interfered. "Why, Aunt Nancy!" said she, "what is the matter? This is Miss Flint, one of the best young ladies in the land."

"No, 'tan't!" said Nan fiercely. "I know better."

Mrs Miller now drew Gertrude aside, into the shadow of the clothes-horse, and conversed with her in an undertone. Gertrude was informed that Mrs Miller was a niece of Ben Grant's, but had seen nothing of him or his wife for years, until a few days previous, Nan had come there in a state of the greatest destitution, and threatened with the fever under which she was now labouring. "I could not refuse her a shelter," said Mrs Miller; "but, as you see, I have no accommodation for her; and it's not

only bad for me to have her sick here in the kitchen, but, what with the noise of the children, and all the other discomforts, I'm afraid the poor old thing will die."

"Have you a room that you could spare above-stairs?" asked Gertrude.

"Why, Jane," answered Mrs. Miller, "offered to give up her room to poor Aunt Nancy. I didn't feel, though, as if we could afford to keep another fire a-going, and so I thought we'd put up a bed here for a day or two, and just see how she got along. But she's looked pretty bad to-day."

"She ought to be kept quiet," said Gertrude; "and, if you will have a fire in Jane's room at my expense, and do what you can to make her comfortable, I'll try and send a physician here to see her" Mrs. Miller was beginning to express the warmest gratitude, but Gertrude interrupted her with saying, "Don't thank me, Mrs. Miller; Nancy is not a stranger to me; I have known her before, and, perhaps, feel more interest in her than you do yourself."

Mrs. Miller looked surprised; but Gertrude, whose time was limited, could not stop to enter into a further explanation. Anxious, however, if possible, to speak to Nan, and assure her of her friendly intentions, she went boldly up to the side of the bed, in spite of the wild and glaring eyes which were fixed steadily upon her.

"Nan," said she, "do you know me?"

"Yes! yes!" replied Nan, in a half-whisper, speaking quickly, and catching her breath; "what have you come for?"

"To do you good, I hope."

But Nan still looked incredulous, and in the same undertone, and with the same nervous accent, enquired, "Have you seen Gerty? Where is she?"

"She is well," answered Gertrude, astonished, however, at the question, for she had supposed herself recognized.

"What did she say about me?"

"She says that she forgives and pities you, and is in hopes to do something to help you and make you well"

"Did she?" said the sick woman "Then you won't kill me?"

"Kill you?—No, indeed. We are in hopes to make you comfortable and cure you"

Mrs Miller, who had been preparing a cup of tea, now drew near with it in her hand. Gertrude took it and offered it to Nan, who drank eagerly of it, staring at her, however, in the meantime, over the edge of the cup When she had finished, she threw herself heavily upon the pillow, and began muttering some indis-

tinct sentences, the only distinguishable word being the name of her son Stephen. Finding the current of her thoughts thus apparently diverted, Gertrude, now feeling in haste to return and relieve Dr. Jeremy, moved a little from the bedside, saying, as she did so, "Good-bye; I will come and see you again"

"You won't hurt me?" exclaimed Nan, starting up once more.

"O, no. I will bring you something you will like"

"Don't bring Gerty here with you! I don't want to see her."

"I will come alone," replied Gertrude.

Nan now lay down, and did not speak again while Gertrude remained in the house, though she watched her steadily until she was outside the door. Mr Cooper made no objection to accompanying his young guide, and they reached home in safety.

Dr. Jeremy, seated at the side of the grate, had the contented appearance of one who is quite at home He had been talking with Mrs Sullivan about the people of a country town where they had both passed some time in their childhood, and the timid woman had come to feel so much at her ease in the society of the entertaining physician, that, although he had, in his unguarded discourse, accidentally disclosed his profession, she allowed him to question her upon the state of her health, without any of the alarm she had nervously fancied she should feel at the sight of a doctor By the time Gertrude returned, he had made himself well acquainted with the case, and was prepared, on Mrs Sullivan's leaving the room for a moment, to report to Gertrude his opinion.

"Gertrude," said he, as soon as the door was shut, "that's a very sick woman"

"Do you think so, Dr. Jeremy?" said Gertrude, much alarmed.

"I do," replied he, thoughtfully. "I wish to mercy I had seen her six months ago"

"Why, doctor! Do you date her illness so far back as that?"

"Yes, and much further She has borne up under the gradual progress of a disease which is now, I fear, beyond medical aid."

"Dr Jeremy," said Gertrude, in tones of great distress, "you do not mean to tell me that auntie is going to die, and leave me and her poor old father, and without ever seeing Willie again, too? O, I had hoped it was not nearly so bad as that!"

"Do not be alarmed, Gertrude," said the doctor, kindly. "I did not mean to frighten you—she may live some time yet I can judge better of her case in a day or two But it is absolutely *unsafe* for you to be here alone with these two friends of yours—to say nothing of its overtasking your strength Has not Mrs Sullivan the means to keep a nurse, or even a domestic? She tells me she has no one"

"Yes, indeed," answered Gerty; "her son supplies her wants most generously. I know that she never draws nearly the whole of the amount he is anxious she should expend"

"Then you must speak to her about getting someone to assist you at once; for, if you do not, *I* shall"

"I intend to do it," said Gertrude. "I have seen the necessity for some time past; but she has such a dread of strangers, that I hated to propose it."

"Nonsense," said the doctor; "that's only imagination in her; she would soon get used to being waited upon"

Mrs. Sullivan now returned, and Gertrude, giving an account of her unexpected rencounter with Nan Grant, begged Dr Jeremy, who knew the particulars of her own early life, and had frequently heard of Nan, to go the next day and see her

"I'll go and see her to-night," answered the doctor, "if the case require it, and to-morrow I shall look in to report how she is, and hear the rest of what Mrs Sullivan was telling me about her wakeful nights. But, Gertrude, do you go, child, and change your wet shoes and stockings I shall have you on my hands next"

Mrs. Sullivan was delighted with Dr. Jeremy, and when he was gone, eagerly sounded his praise "So different," said she, "from common doctors; so sociable and friendly! Why, I felt, Gertrude, as if I could talk to him about my sickness as freely as I could to you"

Gertrude readily joined in the praises bestowed upon her much-valued friend. After the evening meal was over, and Mr Cooper, much wearied with the fatigues of the day, had been persuaded to retire to rest, while Mrs Sullivan, comfortably reclining on the sofa, was enjoying what she always termed her happiest hour, Gertrude broached the subject recommended by Dr. Jeremy. Contrary to her expectations, Mrs Sullivan no longer objected to the proposal of introducing a domestic into the family. Gertrude suggested Jane Miller as a girl remarkably well suited to their wants, and it was agreed that she should be applied for on the following morning

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CHAPTER XXV

THE VISION

It was a fortunate thing for Gertrude that the vacation time at Mr. W——'s school was approaching, and she would thus be more at leisure to attend to her multiplied cares. She considered herself favoured, too, in obtaining the services of Jane, who willingly consented to come and help Gertrude, and under her tuition, Jane, who was neat and capable, was able, after a few days, to relieve Mrs Sullivan of nearly all her household duties, and so far provide for many of her personal wants as to leave Gertrude at liberty to pay frequent visits to the sick-room of Nan, whose fever, having reached its height, rendered her claim for aid at present the most imperative.

We need hardly say that, in Gertrude's still vivid recollection of her former sufferings under the rule of Nan, there remained nothing of bitterness or a spirit of revenge, if she meditated upon the course she should pursue towards her once hated tyrant, it was only to consider how she could best serve and comfort her.

Therefore night after night found her watching by the bedside of the sick woman, who, though still delirious, had entirely lost the fear and dread she had at first felt at her presence Nan talked much of little Gerty—sometimes in a way that led Gertrude to believe herself recognized, but more frequently as if the child were supposed to be absent; and it was not until a long time after that Gertrude was led to adopt the correct supposition, which was, that she had been mistaken for her mother, whom she much resembled, and who, though tended in her last sickness by Nan herself, the fevered, diseased, and conscience-stricken sufferer believed had come back to claim her child at her hands

One night—it was the last of Nan's life—Gertrude, who had scarcely left her during the previous day, and was still maintaining her watch, heard her own name mingled with those of others in a few rapid sentences. She approached the bed and listened intently, for she was always in hopes, during these partly incoherent ravings, to gain some information concerning her own early life. Her name was not repeated, however, and for some time Nan's voice was indistinct Then, suddenly starting up and addressing herself to some imaginary person, she shouted aloud, "Stephie! Stephie! give me back the watch, and tell me what you did with the rings?—They will ask—those folks!—and what shall

I tell them?" Then, after a pause, during which her eyes were fixed steadily upon the wall, she said, in a more feeble, but equally earnest voice, "No, no, Stephie, I never'll tell—I *never, never* will!" The moment the words had left her lips, she started, turned, saw Gerty standing by the bedside, and, with a frightful look, shrieked, rather than asked, "Did you hear? Did you hear?—You did," she continued, "and you'll tell! O, if you *do*!" She was here preparing to spring from the bed, but overcome with exhaustion, sank back on the pillow. Summoning both Mr. and Mrs. Miller, the agitated Gertrude, believing that her own presence was too exciting, left the now dying woman to their care, and sought in another part of the house to calm her disturbed mind and disordered nerves. Day was just dawning when Mrs. Miller came to tell her that Nan had breathed her last.

Gerty's work of mercy, forgiveness, and Christian love being thus finished, she hastened home to recruit her wasted strength, and fortify herself, as she best might, for the labour and suffering yet in store for her.

And it was no ordinary strength and fortitude that she needed to sustain her through a period such as persons in this world are often called upon to meet, when scenes of suffering, sickness, and death follow each other in quick succession. In less than three weeks from the time of Nan Grant's death, Paul Cooper was smitten by the destroyer's hand, and, after a brief illness, he too, was laid to his last rest. Emily's absence was also a sore trial to her, for she was accustomed to rely upon her for advice and counsel, and, in seasons of peculiar distress, to learn patience and submission from one who was herself a living exemplification of both virtues. Only one letter had been received from the travellers, and that, written by Mrs. Ellis, contained little that was satisfactory. It was written from Havana, where they were boarding in a house kept by an American lady, and crowded with visitors from Boston, New York, and other Northern cities.

Gertrude wrote frequently to Emily, but, as Miss Graham was dependent upon Mrs. Ellis's eyesight, and the letters must, therefore, be subject to her scrutiny, she could not express her innermost thoughts and feelings as she was wont to do in conversation with her sympathizing and indulgent friend.

Every Indian mail brought news from William Sullivan, who prosperous in business, and rendered happy even in his exile by the belief that the friends he loved best were in the enjoyment of the fruits of his exertions, wrote always in his accustomed strain of cheerfulness.

One Sabbath afternoon, a few weeks after Mr. Cooper's death, found Gertrude with an open letter in her hand. It had that day been received, and Mrs. Sullivan, as she lay stretched upon her couch, had been listening for the third time to the reading of its contents. The bright hopes expressed by her son, and the gay tone in which he wrote, all unconscious, as he yet was, of the cloud of sorrow that was gathering for him, formed so striking a contrast to her own reflections, that she lay with her eyes closed, and oppressed with an unwonted degree of sadness; while Gertrude, as she glanced at the passage in which Willie dilated upon the "joy of once more clasping in his arms the dear little mother whom he so longed to see again", and then turned her gaze upon the wasted form and faded cheek of that mother, felt an indescribable chill at her heart Dr. Jeremy's first fears were all confirmed, and, her disease still further aggravated by the anxiety and agitation which attended her father's sickness and death, Mrs. Sullivan was rapidly passing away.

Whether she were herself aware that this was the case, Gertrude had not yet been able to determine, and Gertrude, as she surveyed her placid countenance, was almost inclined to believe that she was yet deceiving herself with the expectation of recovery.

All doubt on this point was soon removed, for, after remaining a short time engaged in deep thought, Mrs Sullivan opened her eyes, and said, in a calm, distinct voice—

"Gertrude, I shall never see Willie again."

Gertrude made no reply

"I wish to write, and tell him so myself," she continued; "or, rather, if you will write for me, as you have done so many times already, I should like to tell you what to say; and I feel that no time is to be lost, for I am failing fast, and may not long have strength to do it Will you commence a letter to-day?"

"Certainly, auntie, if you think it best"

"I do, Gerty What you wrote by the last mail was chiefly concerning my father's sickness and death; and there was nothing mentioned which would be likely to alarm him on my account, was there?"

"Nothing at all."

"Then it is quite time he should be forewarned, poor boy! I do not need Dr Jeremy to tell me that I am dying"

"Did he tell you so?" asked Gertrude, as she went to her desk, and began to arrange her writing materials.

"No, Gerty! he was too prudent for that; but *I* told *him*, and he did not contradict me You have known it some time, have

you not?" she enquired, gazing earnestly in the face of Gertrude, who was bending over the invalid, and smoothing the hair from her forehead.

"Some weeks," replied Gertrude, imprinting a kiss upon the pale brow of the sufferer.

"Why did you not tell me?"

"Why should I, dear auntie?" said Gertrude, her voice trembling with emotion. "I knew the Lord could never call you at a time when your lamp would not be trimmed and burning."

"Feebly—it burns feebly!" said the humble Christian.

"Whose, then, is bright," responded Gertrude, "if yours be dim? Unless it be Emily, auntie, I know of no one who seems so fit for heaven."

"O, no, Gerty, I am a sinful creature, full of weakness; much as I long to meet my Saviour, my earthly heart pines with the vain desire for one more sight of my boy, and all my dreams of heaven are mingled with the aching regret that the one blessing I most craved on earth has been denied me."

"O, auntie!" exclaimed Gertrude, "we are all human! Until the mortal put on immortality, how *can* you cease to think of Willie, and long for his presence in this trying hour? It cannot be a sin—that which is so natural!"

"I do not know, Gerty; perhaps it is not; and, if it be, I trust, before I go hence, I shall be blessed with a spirit of perfect submission, that will atone for the occasional murmuring of a mother's heart! It is sinful, indeed, in me, Gertrude, to indulge the least repining, blessed as I am in the love and care of one who is dear to me as a daughter!"

Gertrude took her Bible, and opening it at the Gospel of St. Mark, her eye fell at once upon the account of our Saviour's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. This she read, and as she finished she perceived that Mrs. Sullivan had fallen asleep. When, after a little while, she awoke, she told Gertrude that she had had a beautiful dream about her son Willie. It seemed to have made her perfectly happy, and from this time until her death, which took place about a month afterwards, Mrs. Sullivan's mind remained in a state of perfect resignation and tranquillity. As she said, the last pang had lost its bitterness. In the letter which she dictated to Willie, she expressed her perfect trust in the goodness and wisdom of Providence, and exhorted him to cherish the same submissive love for the All-wise. She reminded him of the early lessons she had taught him, the piety and self-command which she had inculcated, and made it her dying prayer that her

influence might be increased, rather than diminished, and her presence felt to be a continual reality.

After Gertrude had folded the letter, which she supposed completed, and left the house to attend to those duties in school which she still continued regularly to perform, Mrs. Sullivan reopened the nearly covered sheet, and, with her own feeble and trembling hand, recounted the disinterested, patient, loving devotion of Gertrude "So long," said she, "my son, as you cherish in your heart the memory of your grandfather and mother, cease not to bestow all the gratitude of which that heart is capable upon one whose praises my hand is too feeble to portray"

So slow and gradual was the decline of Mrs Sullivan, that her death at last came as an unexpected blow to Gertrude, who, though she saw the ravages of the disease, could not realize that a termination must come to their work

In the dead hours of the night, with no one to sustain and encourage her but the frightened and trembling Jane, did she watch the departing spirit of her much-loved friend "Are you afraid to see me die, Gertrude?" asked Mrs Sullivan, about an hour before her death On Gertrude's answering that she was not—"Then turn me a little towards you," said she, "that your face, my darling, may be the last to me of earth"

It was done, and with her hand locked fast in Gertrude's, and a look that spoke of the deepest affection, she expired.

CHAPTER XXVI

MORE CHANGES

Not until her work of love was thus ended, did Gertrude become conscious that the long continuance of her labours by night and day had worn upon her frame, and utterly exhausted her strength But, after struggling with disquieting symptoms for several days, she rallied; and, though still pale and worn by care and anxiety, was able to resume her classes at school, and make arrangements for providing herself with another home.

Mrs Jeremy was at first disposed to feel hurt and wounded by Gertrude's refusal to come to them without delay, and consider herself established for any length of time that she chose to remain; and the doctor himself was so peremptory, with his "Come, Gertrude, come right home with us—don't say a word!" that

she was afraid lest, in her weak state of health, she should be actually carried off, without a *chance* to remonstrate

All her reasoning upon general principles proved insufficient to convince the warm-hearted couple "It was all nonsense about independent position She would be perfectly independent with them, and her company would be such a pleasure that she need feel no hesitation in accepting their offer, and might be sure she would herself be conferring a favour, instead of being the party obliged."

"My friend," said Gertrude, "I hope you will not condemn in me a motive which has, I confess, strengthened my firmness in this matter. I should be unwilling to mention it, if I did not know that you are so far acquainted with the state of affairs between Mr Graham and myself as to understand, and in some degree sympathize with, my feelings. You know that he was opposed to my leaving them, and hinted that I should never be able to support myself, but should be driven to a life of dependence; and since the salary which I receive from Mr W—— is sufficient for all my wants, I am anxious to be so situated on Mr Graham's return, that he will perceive that my assurance that I could earn my own living was not without foundation"

"So Graham thought that, without his sustaining power, you would soon come to beggary—did he? That's just like him!"

"O, no, no!" replied Gertrude, "I did not say that, but I seemed to him a mere child, and he did not realize that in giving me an education, he had, as it were, paid my expenses in advance"

"I understand," said the doctor "He thought you would be glad to come back to them; just like him!"

"Well now," said Mrs Jeremy, "I don't believe he thought any such thing He was provoked, and didn't mind what he said Ten to one he will never think of it again, and it seems to me it is only a kind of pride in Gertrude to care anything about it"

"I don't know that, wife," said the doctor "If it *is* pride, it's an honourable pride, that I like, and I am not sure but, if I were in Gertrude's place, I should feel just as she does, so I sha'n't urge her to do any other ways than she proposes She doesn't need to be told that, in case of any sickness or trouble, our doors are always open to her"

"No, indeed," said Mrs Jeremy, "and, if you feel set about it, Gerty, I am sure I shall want you to do whatever pleases you best, but one thing I do insist on, and that is, that you leave this

house this very day, go home with me, and stay until you get recruited."

Gertrude, gladly consenting to a short visit, compromised the matter by accompanying them without delay.

Mrs. Arnold had a widowed sister, who was in the habit of adding to her moderate income by receiving into her family, as boarders, a few young ladies who came to the city for purposes of education. Gertrude did not know this lady personally, but had heard her warmly praised; and she indulged the hope that, through her friend the clergyman's wife, she might obtain with her an agreeable and not too expensive residence. In this she was not disappointed. Mrs. Warren had fortunately vacant, at this time, a large and cheerful front chamber, and, Mrs. Arnold having recommended Gertrude in the warmest manner, suitable terms were agreed upon, and the room immediately placed at her disposal.

On entering the dining-room the first evening after Gerty took up her residence at Mrs. Warren's, she expected to meet only strangers at the tea-table, but was agreeably disappointed at the sight of Fanny Bruce, who, left in Boston while her mother and brother were spending the winter in travelling, had now been several weeks an inmate of Mrs. Warren's house.

Fanny Bruce was a girl of good disposition and warm heart, but she had been much neglected by her mother, whose chief pride was in her son, the same Ben of whom we have previously spoken. She had often been left behind in some boarding-house, while her pleasure-loving mother and indolent brother passed their time in journeying, and had not always been so fortunately situated as at present. A sense of loneliness, a want of sympathy in any of her pursuits, had been a source of great unhappiness to the poor child, who laboured under the painful consciousness that but little interest was felt by anyone in her improvement or happiness.

Gertrude had not been long at Mrs. Warren's before she observed that Fanny occupied an isolated position in the family. Her apparent loneliness could not fail to excite the compassion of one who was herself suffering from recent sorrow and bereavement; and, although the quiet and privacy of her own room were, at this time, grateful to Gertrude's feelings, pity for poor Fanny induced her to invite her frequently to come and sit with her, and she often so far forgot her own griefs as to exert herself in providing entertainment for her young visitor, who, on her part, considered it privilege enough to share Gertrude's retirement, read her books, and feel confident of her friendship. During the month of March, which was unusually stormy, Fanny spent almost every evening

with Gertrude; and she, who at first felt that she was making a sacrifice of her own comfort and ease by giving another such constant access to her apartment, came, at last, to realize the force of Uncle True's prophecy, that, in her efforts for the happiness of others, she would at last find her own, for Fanny's lively, and often amusing, conversation drew Gertrude from the contemplation of her trials, and the interest and affection she awakened saved her from the painful consciousness of her solitary situation

April arrived, and still no further news from Emily Gertrude's heart ached with a vain longing once more to pour out her griefs on the bosom of that dear friend, and find in her consolation, encouragement, and support. For some time Gertrude wrote regularly, but of late she had not known where to direct her letters, and since Mrs. Sullivan's death there had been no communication between her and the travellers. She was sitting at her window one evening, thinking of that group of friends whom she had loved with a daughter's and a sister's love, and who were now separated from her by distance, or death, when she was summoned below-stairs to see Mr. Arnold and his daughter Anne

After the usual civilities and enquiries, Miss Arnold turned to Gertrude, and said, "Of course you have heard the news, Gertrude?"

"No," replied Gertrude; "I have heard nothing special."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Arnold, "have you not heard of Mr Graham's marriage?"

Gertrude started up in surprise. "Do you really mean so, Mr. Arnold? Mr. Graham married! When? To whom?"

"To the widow Holbrook, a sister-in-law of Mr. Clinton's, she has been staying at Havana with a party from the North, and the Grahams met her there"

"But, Gertrude," asked Mr Arnold, "how does it happen you have not heard of it? It is in all the newspapers—'Married in New Orleans, J. H. Graham, Esq., of Boston, to Mrs. Somebody or other Holbrook'."

"I have not seen a newspaper for a day or two," replied Gertrude.

"And Miss Graham's blindness, I suppose, prevents her writing," said Anne; "but I should have thought Mr. Graham would have sent wedding compliments"

Gertrude made no reply, and Miss Arnold continued laughingly, "I suppose his bride engrosses all his attention"

"Do you know anything of this Mrs. Holbrook?" asked Gertrude.

"Not much," answered Mr. Arnold. "I have seen her occasionally at Mr. Clinton's. She is a handsome, showy woman, fond of society, I should think."

"I have seen her very often," said Anne. "She is a coarse, noisy, dashing person—just the one to make Miss Emily miserable."

Gertrude looked distressed, and Mr. Arnold glanced reprovingly at his daughter.

"Anne," said he, "are you sure you speak advisedly?"

"Belle Clinton is my authority, father. I only judge from what I used to hear her say at school about her Aunt *Bella*, as she always used to call her."

"Did Isabel represent her aunt so unfavourably?"

"Not intentionally," replied Anne; "she meant the greatest praise, but I never liked anything she told us about her."

"We will not condemn her until we can decide upon acquaintance," said Mr. Arnold mildly; "perhaps she will prove the very reverse of what you suppose her."

"Can you tell me anything concerning Emily?" asked Gertrude, "and whether Mr. Graham is soon to return?"

"I have seen only the notice in the papers," said Miss Arnold. "When did you hear from them yourself?"

Gertrude mentioned the date of her letter from Mrs Ellis, the account she had given of a gay party from the North, and suggested the probability that the present Mrs Graham was the widow she had described

"The same, undoubtedly," said Mr. Arnold

At this juncture Dr. and Mrs. Jeremy entered. The former held in his hand a sealed letter, directed to Gertrude, in the handwriting of Mr. Graham, and, as he handed it to her, he rubbed his hands, and, looking at Anne Arnold, exclaimed, "Now, Miss Anne, we shall hear all about these famous nuptials!"

Finding her visitors thus eager to learn the contents of her letter, Gertrude broke the seal, and hastily perused its contents. The envelope contained two or three pages closely written by Mrs Ellis, and also a somewhat lenghty note from Mr. Graham. Surprised as Gertrude was at any communication from one who had parted from her in anger, her strongest desire was to hear particularly from Emily, and she therefore gave the preference to the housekeeper's document, that being most likely to contain the desired information. It ran as follows.—

"*New York*, 31*st March*, 1852.

"DEAR GERTRUDE,—As there were plenty of Boston folks at the wedding, I dare say you have heard before this of Mr.

Graham's marriage. He married the widow Holbrook, the same I wrote to you about. She was determined to have him, and she's got him. I don't hesitate to say he's got the worst of the bargain. He likes a quiet life, and he's lost the chance of that—poor man!—for she's the greatest hand for company that ever I saw. She followed Mr. Graham up pretty well at Havana, but I guess he thought better of it, and didn't really mean to have her. When we got to New Orleans, however, she was there; and the long and short of it is, she carried her point, and married him. Emily behaved beautifully; she never said a word against it, and always treated the lady as pleasantly as could be; but, dear me! how will our Emily get along with so many young folks as there are about all the time now, and so much noise and confusion? For my part, I an't used to it, and don't pretend that I think it's agreeable. The new lady is civil enough to me, now she's married. I dare say she thinks it stands her in hand, as long as she's one of the family, and I've been in it so long. Poor Emily isn't very well, I don't mean that she's downright sick,—it's low spirits and nervousness, I suppose, more than anything. She gets tired and worried very quick, and is easily startled and disturbed, which didn't used to be the case. I think likely it's the new wife, and all the nieces, and other disagreeable things. She never complains, and nobody would know but what she was pleased to have her father married again; but she hasn't seemed quite happy all winter, and now it troubles me to see how sad she looks sometimes. She talks a sight about you, and felt dreadfully not to get any more letters. To come to the principal thing, however, they are all going to Europe—Emily and all. I take it, it's the new wife's idea; but, whoever proposed the thing, it's all settled now. Mr. Graham wanted me to go, but I wouldn't hear of such a thing; I would as soon be hung as venture on the sea again, and I told him so, up and down So now he has written for you to go with Emily; and if you are not afraid of sea-sickness, I hope you won't refuse, for it would be dreadful for her to have a stranger, and you know she always needs somebody. I do not think she has the least wish to go; but she would not ask to be left behind, for fear her father should think she did not like the new wife.

"As soon as they sail—which will be the last of April—I shall come back to the house in D——, and see to things there while they are away.

"Yours very truly,

"Sarah H. Ellis."

A postscript contained the following:—

"I need not tell my darling Gertrude how much I have missed her, and longed to have her with me again; how I have thought of her by night and day, and prayed God to strengthen and fit her for her many trials and labours. The letter written soon after Mr. Cooper's death is the last that has reached me, and I do not know whether Mrs. Sullivan is still living. Write to me at once, my dear child, if you cannot come to us. Father will tell you of our plans, and ask you to accompany us to Europe; my heart will be light if I can take my dear Gerty with me, but not if she leave any other duty behind. I trust to you, my love, to decide aright. You have heard of father's marriage. It is a great change for us all, but will, I trust, result in happiness. Mrs. Graham has two nieces, who are with us at the hotel. They are to be of our party to go abroad, and are, I understand, very beautiful girls, especially Belle Clinton, whom you have seen in Boston some years ago. Mrs Ellis is very tired of writing, and I must close with assuring my dearest Gertrude of the devoted affection of

"EMILY GRAHAM."

It was with great curiosity that Gertrude unfolded Mr. Graham's epistle. It ran thus:—

"MISS GERTRUDE FLINT,—I am married, and intend to go abroad on the 28th of April; my daughter will accompany us, and, as Mrs Ellis dreads the sea, I am induced to propose that you join us at New York, and attend the party, as a companion to Emily. I have not forgotten the ingratitude with which you once slighted a similar offer on my part, and nothing would compel me to give you another opportunity to manifest such a spirit but a desire to promote the happiness of Emily, and a sincere wish to be of service to a young person who has been in my family so long that I feel a friendly interest in providing for her. I thus put it in your power, by complying with our wishes, to do away from my mind the recollection of your past behaviour; and, if you choose to return to us, I shall enable you to maintain the place and appearance of a lady. As we sail the last of the month, it is important you should be here in the course of a fortnight; and if you will write and name the day, I will myself meet you at the boat. Mrs. Ellis being anxious to return to Boston, I hope you will come as soon as possible. As you will be obliged to incur expenses, I enclose a sum of money sufficient to cover them. If you have contracted debts, let me know to what amount, and I will see that all is

made right before you leave Trusting to your being now come to a sense of your duty, I am ready to subscribe myself your friend.

"J H. GRAHAM."

Gertrude was sitting near a lamp, whose light fell directly upon her face, which, as she glanced over Mr Graham's note, flushed crimson with wounded pride Dr. Jeremy, who was watching her countenance, observed that she changed colour, and during the few minutes that Mr and Miss Arnold stayed to hear the news, he gave an occasional glance of defiance at the letter, and as soon as they were gone, begged to be made acquainted with its contents, assuring Gertrude that if she did not let him know what Graham said, he should believe it a thousand times more insulting than it really was

"He writes," said Gertrude, "to invite me to accompany them to Europe"

"Indeed!" said Dr Jeremy, with a low whistle, "and he thinks you'll be silly enough to pack up and start off at a minute's notice!"

"Why, Gerty," said Mrs. Jeremy, "you'll like to go, sha'n't you, dear? It will be delightful!"

"Delightful?—nonsense, Mrs Jerry," exclaimed the doctor. "What is there delightful, I want to know, in travelling about with an arrogant old tyrant, his blind daughter, upstart, dashy wife, and her two fine-lady nieces? A pretty position Gertrude would be in, a slave to the whims of all that company!"

"Why, Dr. Jerry," interrupted his wife, "you forget Emily!"

"Emily!—to be sure, she's an angel, and never would impose upon anybody, least of all her own pet; but she'll have to play second fiddle herself, and I'm mistaken if she doesn't find it pretty hard to defend her rights and maintain a comfortable position in her father's enlarged family circle."

"So much the more need, then," said Gertrude, "that some-one should be enlisted in her interests, to ward off the approach of every annoyance"

"Do you mean, then, to put yourself in the breach?" asked the doctor.

"I mean to accept Mr Graham's invitation," replied Gertrude, "and join Emily at once, but I trust the harmony that seems to subsist between her and her new connections will continue undisturbed, so that I shall have no occasion to take up arms on *her* account, and on *my own* I do not entertain a single fear"

"Then you really think you shall go?" said Mrs. Jeremy.

"I do," said Gertrude; "nothing but my duty to Mrs Sullivan and her father led me to think of leaving Emily. That duty is at an end, and now that I can be of use to her, and she wishes me back, I cannot hesitate a moment. I see very plainly, from Mrs. Ellis's letter, that Emily is not happy, and nothing which I can do to make her so must be neglected. Only think, Mrs. Jeremy, what a friend she has been to me!"

"I know it," said Mrs Jeremy, "and I dare say you will enjoy the journey, in spite of all the scarecrows the doctor sets up to frighten you; but still, I declare, it does seem a sacrifice for you to leave your beautiful room, and all your comforts, for such an uncertain sort of life as one has travelling with a large party"

"Sacrifice!" interrupted the doctor, "it's the greatest sacrifice that ever I heard of!"

"No, doctor," said Gertrude warmly, "nothing that I do for *Emily's* sake can be called a sacrifice, it is my greatest pleasure"

"Gerty always finds her pleasure in doing what is right," remarked Mrs Jeremy.

"O, no," said Gertrude, "my wishes often lead me astray, but not in this case. I *must* go to her; I cannot think of doing otherwise."

"I wish I thought," muttered Dr. Jeremy, "that the sacrifice you make would be half appreciated. But there's Graham, I'll venture to say, thinking it will be the greatest favour in the world to take you back again. I wonder what would have induced poor Philip Amory to go back." Then, in a louder tone, he enquired, "Has he made any apology in his letter for past unkindness?"

"I do not think he considered any to be needed," replied Gertrude.

Mrs Jeremy now interested herself in the details of Gertrude's arrangements, offered an attic room for the storage of her furniture, gave up to her a dressmaker whom she had engaged for herself, and before she left a plan was laid on, by following which Gertrude would be enabled to start for New York in less than a week.

In less than a fortnight from the time of her departure, Mrs. Ellis returned to Boston, and brought news of the safe conclusion of Gertrude's journey. A letter, received a week after, by Mrs Jeremy, announced that they should sail in a few days She was, therefore, surprised, when a second epistle was put into her hands, dated the day succeeding that on which she supposed

Mr. Graham's party to have left the country. It was as follows:—

"*New York, April 29th*

"MY DEAR MRS. JEREMY,—As yesterday was the day on which we expected to sail for Europe, you will be somewhat astonished to hear that we are yet in New York, and still more so to learn that the foreign tour is now indefinitely postponed. Only two days since Mr Graham was seized with his old complaint, the gout, and the attack proved so violent as seriously to threaten his life. Although to-day somewhat relieved, and considered by his physician out of immediate danger, he remains a great sufferer, and a sea voyage is pronounced impracticable for months to come His great anxiety is to be at home; and, as soon as it is possible for him to bear the journey, we shall all hasten to the house in D——. I enclose a note for Mrs Ellis. It contains various directions which Emily is desirous she should receive, and as we did not know how to address her, I have sent it to you, trusting to your kindness to see it forwarded. Mrs Graham and her nieces, who have been anticipating much pleasure from going abroad, are, of course, greatly disappointed at the entire change in their plans for the summer. It is particularly trying to Miss Clinton, as her father has been absent more than a year, and she was hoping to meet him in Paris.

"It is impossible that either Emily or myself should personally regret a journey of which we felt only dread, and, were it not for Mr Graham's illness being the cause of its postponement, we should both, I think, find it hard not to realize a degree of selfish satisfaction in the prospect of returning to the dear old place in D——, where we hope to be established in the course of the next month. I say *we*, for neither Mr. Graham nor Emily will hear of my leaving them again.

"I am yours, very sincerely,

"GERTRUDE FLINT."

CHAPTER XXVII

JEALOUSY

Mr. Graham's country house boasted a fine old-fashioned entry, with a door at either end, both of which usually stood open during the warm weather, admitting a cool current of air, and rendering the neighbourhood of the front entrance a favourite

resort for the family. Here, on a pleasant June morning, Isabel Clinton, and her cousin, Kitty Ray, had made themselves comfortable. Isabel had drawn a large arm-chair close to the door-sill, ensconced herself in it, and was gazing idly down the road. She was a beautiful girl, tall and finely formed, with a delicate complexion, clear, blue eyes, and rich, light, flowing curls. The same lovely child, whom Gertrude had gazed upon with rapture, as, leaning against the window of her father's house, she watched old True while he lit his lamp, had ripened into an equally lovely woman. Her uncommon beauty, aided and enhanced by all the advantages of dress which skill could suggest or money provide, made her universally admired, flattered, and caressed.

At an early age deprived of her mother, and left for some years almost wholly to the care of servants, she soon learned to appreciate, at more than their true value, the outward attractions she possessed; and her aunt, under whose tutelage she had been since she left school, was little calculated to counteract in her this undue self-admiration. She was looking vastly well, as she sat there, attired in a blue cashmere morning-dress, richly embroidered and flowing open in front, for the purpose of displaying an equally rich flounced cambric petticoat. It can scarcely be wondered at that she was herself pleased and satisfied with an outward appearance that could not fail to please and satisfy the most severe critic.

On a low seat at her feet sat Kitty Ray, a complete contrast to her cousin in looks, manners, and many points of character. Kitty was one of those whom the world usually calls a sweet little creature, lively, playful, and affectionate. She was a pretty girl, always bright and animated, mirthful and happy: fond of her cousin Belle, and sometimes influenced by her, though often, on the other hand, enlisting with all her force on the opposite side of some contested question. Unlike Belle, she was seldom well dressed, for, though possessed of ample means, she was very careless. On the present occasion, her dark silk wrapper was half concealed by a crimson flannel sack, which she held tightly around her, declaring that it was a dreadful chilly morning, and that she was half-frozen to death.

"I wonder who those people are coming up the road," said Belle; "I've been watching them for some time."

Kitty stood up, and looked in the direction to which Belle pointed. After observing the couple who were approaching her a minute or two, she exclaimed: "Why, that's Gertrude Flint! I wonder where she's been? and who can that be with her? I didn't know there was a beau to be had about here."

"Beau!" said Belle sneeringly.

"And why not a beau, Cousin Belle? I'm sure he looks like one."

"I wouldn't give much for any of her beaux!" said Belle

"Wouldn't you?" said Kitty. "You'd better wait until you see who they are: you near-sighted people shouldn't decide in such a hurry. I can tell you that he's a gentleman you wouldn't object to walking with yourself; it's Mr. Bruce, the one we met in New Orleans."

"I don't believe it!" exclaimed Belle, starting up.

"You will soon have a chance to see for yourself, for he is coming home with her."

"*He is!* What can he be walking with her for?"

"To show his taste, perhaps. I am sure he could not find more agreeable company."

"You and I don't agree about that," replied Belle. "I don't see anything very agreeable about her."

"Because you are determined not to, Belle. Everybody else thinks her charming, and Mr. Bruce is opening the gate for her as politely as if she were a queen. I like him for that."

"Do see!" said Belle. "She's got on that white cape bonnet of hers, and that checked gingham dress! I wonder what Mr. Bruce thinks of her, and he such a critic in regard to ladies' dress."

Gertrude and her companion now drew near the house. The former looked up, saw the young ladies in the doorway, and smiled pleasantly at Kitty, who was making strange grimaces, and giving significant glances over Belle's shoulder; but Mr. Bruce, who seemed much engaged by the society he was already enjoying, did not observe either of them; and they distinctly heard him say, as he handed Gertrude a small parcel he had been carrying for her, "I believe I won't come in; it's such a *bore* to have to talk to strangers. Do you work in the garden, mornings, this summer?"

"No," replied Gertrude, "there is nothing left of my garden but the memory of it."

"Why, Miss Gertrude," said the young man, "I hope these new-comers haven't interfered with——" Here, observing the direction of Gertrude's eyes, he raised his own, saw Belle and Kitty standing opposite to him, and, compelled now to recognize and speak with them, went forward to shake hands.

Mr. Bruce knew perfectly well that the nieces of the present Mrs. Graham were the same girls he had met at the South, and was, nevertheless, indifferent about renewing his acquaintance.

His vanity, however, was not proof against the evident pleasure they both manifested at seeing him again; and he was in a few minutes engaged in an animated conversation with them, while Gertrude quietly entered the house, and went upstairs to Emily's room. Thither Mrs. Ellis presently came with complaints of the many things she had to attend to, and, in order to help her, Gertrude offered to take the stalks off some strawberries for her.

Mrs Ellis was only too thankful for Gertrude's help, and seating herself in the dining-room, Gerty commenced her task. In the meanwhile, Belle and Kitty were doing their best to entertain Mr. Bruce, who, sitting on the door-steps, and leaning back against a pillar of the piazza, from time to time cast his eyes down the entry and up the staircase, in hopes of Gertrude's reappearance; but, despairing of it at last, he was on the point of taking his departure, when his sister Fanny came in at the gate, and was rushing past the assembled trio and into the house.

Her brother, however, caught her, and before he let her go, whispered something in her ear.

"Who is that wild Indian?" asked Kitty Ray, as Fanny ran across the entry and disappeared.

"A sister of mine," answered Ben in a nonchalant manner.

"Is she?" said Kitty; "I have seen her here several times, and never took any notice of her. What a pretty girl she is!"

"Do you think so?" said Ben "Sorry I can't agree with you. I think she's a fright"

Fanny now reappeared, and stopping a moment on her way upstairs, called out, "She says she can't come; she's busy"

"Who?" asked Kitty, in her turn catching Fanny and detaining her

"Miss Flint"

Mr. Bruce coloured slightly, and Belle observed it

"Where are you going, Fanny?" asked her brother.

"Upstairs Miss Flint said I might go up and bring down the birds"

She ran off, and soon came back again with a cage in her hand, containing the little monias sent by Willie from Calcutta

"Put them down on the door-step, Fanny," said Ben, "so that we can see them better."

"I'm afraid you'll frighten them," replied Fanny.

"No, we won't," said Ben, "we are disposed to be very friendly to Miss Gertrude's birds. Where did she get them, do you know, Fanny?"

"Mr Sullivan sent them to her from India He is a particular friend of hers"

"Do you know his Christian name?" asked Belle.

"I suppose it's William," said Fanny. "Miss Emily calls the birds little Willies"

"Belle!" exclaimed Kitty, "that's your William Sullivan!"

"I don't know what you mean, Kitty," said Belle tartly "Mr Sullivan is a junior partner of my father's, but I have not seen him for years"

"Except in your dreams, Belle," suggested Kitty "You forget"

Belle now looked angry, and took no pains to conceal the fact. Mr Bruce felt awkward and annoyed, and soon went away, leaving the two cousins to settle their difficulty as they best could As soon as he had gone, Belle folded up her work and walked upstairs to her room with great dignity, while Kitty stayed behind to laugh over the matter, and improve her opportunity to make friends with Fanny Bruce She called Fanny to sit beside her, put her arm round her waist, and commenced talking about Gertrude, and the origin and extent of the intimacy which seemed to exist between her and the Bruce family

Fanny, who was always communicative, willingly informed her of the circumstances which had attached her so strongly to a friend who was some years her senior.

"And your brother," said Kitty; "he has known her some time, hasn't he?"

"Yes, indeed, I suppose so," answered Fanny carelessly.

"What did he whisper to you when you came up the steps?"

"O, he bade me ask Miss Gertrude if she wasn't coming back to see him again, and tell her he was tired to death waiting for her"

Kitty pouted and looked vexed "I want to know," said she, "if Miss Flint has been in the habit of receiving company here, and being treated like an equal?"

"Of course she has," answered Fanny, with spirit, "why shouldn't she? She's the most perfect lady I ever saw, and mother says she has beautiful manners, and I must take pattern by her"

Fanny now joined Gertrude, and Kitty stretched herself on the entry sofa and fell asleep She was awakened by her aunt, who returned from the city a short time before dinner, and finding her asleep in her morning wrapper, shook her by the arm and said, "Kitty, wake up and go dress for dinner."

It was Kitty's policy, after giving offence to her cousin Belle, to appear utterly unconscious of the existence of any unkind feelings; and though Belle often manifested some degree of sulkiness, she

was too dependent upon Kitty's society to retain that disposition long They were soon, therefore, chatting together as usual

"Belle," said Kitty, as she stood arranging her hair at the glass, "do you remember a girl we used to meet every morning on our way to school, walking with a paralytic old man?"

"Yes"

"Do you know, I think it was Gertrude Flint. She has altered very much; but the features are still the same, and there certainly never was but one such pair of eyes"

"I have no doubt she is the same person," said Belle.

"Did you think of it before?"

"Yes, as soon as Fanny spoke of her knowing Willie Sullivan"

"Why, Belle! Why didn't you speak of it?"

"I don't feel so much interest in her as you and some others do."

"What others?"

"Why, Mr. Bruce; don't you see he is half in love with her?"

"No, I don't see any such thing, he has known her for a long time, and of course he feels a respect for a girl that the Grahams make so much of But I don't believe he'd think of being in love with a poor girl like her, with no family connections to boast of."

"Perhaps he didn't *think* of being"

"Well, he *wouldn't* be. She isn't the sort of person that would suit him. He would want a wife that was very lively and fond of company, and know how to make a show with money."

"A girl, for instance, like Kitty Ray."

"How ridiculous, Belle! just as if people couldn't talk without thinking of themselves all the time! What do I care about Ben Bruce?"

"I don't know that you care anything about him, but I wouldn't pull all the hair out of my head about it, as you seem to be doing There's the dinner-bell, and you'll be late, as usual."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE DISAPPOINTED WOOER

Twilight of this same day found Gertrude and Emily seated at a window which commanded a delightful western view. Gertrude had been describing to her blind friend the gorgeous picture presented to her vision by the masses of rich and brilliantly painted

cloud; but now the glory had faded away, save a long strip of gold which skirted the horizon, and the stars as they came out, one by one, seemed to look in at the chamber window with a smile of recognition.

In the parlour below there was company from the city, and the sound of mirth and laughter came up on the evening breeze; so mellowed, however, by distance, that it contrasted with the peace of the quiet room, without disturbing it

They were interrupted by Katy, whom Mrs Graham sent to announce a new visitor—Mrs. Bruce—who had enquired for Emily.

"I suppose I must go down," said Emily; "you'll come too, Gertrude"

"No, I believe not, unless she asked for me Did she, Katy?"

"Mrs Graham was only afther mintioning Miss Emily," said Katy.

"Then I will stay here," said Gertrude; and Emily, finding it to be her wish, went without her.

There was soon another loud ring at the door-bell, and this time Gertrude's presence was particularly requested, to see Dr. and Mrs Jeremy.

When she entered the parlour, she found a great number of guests assembled, and every seat in the room occupied As she came in alone and unexpected by the greater part of the company, all eyes were turned upon her. Contrary to the expectation of Belle and Kitty, who were watching her with curiosity, she manifested neither embarrassment nor awkwardness, but glancing leisurely at the various groups until she recognized Mrs Jeremy, crossed the large saloon with characteristic grace, and as much ease and self-possession as if she were the only person present. After greeting that lady with her usual warmth and cordiality, she turned to speak to the doctor; but he was sitting next Fanny Bruce, in the window seat, and was half concealed by the curtain. Before he could rise and come forward, Mrs Bruce nodded pleasantly from the opposite corner, and Gertrude went to shake hands with her. Mr. Bruce, who formed one in a gay circle of young ladies and gentlemen collected in that part of the room, now rose and offered his chair, saying.

"Miss Gertrude, do take this seat"

"Thank you," said Gertrude, "but I see my friend the doctor on the other side of the room, he expects me to come and speak to him—so don't let me disturb you."

Doctor Jeremy now came half-way across the room to meet her, and, taking her by both hands, led her into the recess formed

by the window, and placed her in his own seat, next to Fanny Bruce. To the astonishment of all who knew him, Ben Bruce brought his own chair, and placed it for the doctor opposite to Gertrude

A moment after Kitty Ray missed Ben from the room, and immediately espied him standing on the piazza, and leaning through the open window to talk with Gertrude, Dr. Jeremy, and Fanny. The conversation soon became very lively; there seemed to be a war of wits going on; the doctor especially laughed very loud, and Gertrude and Fanny often joining in the merry peal Kitty endured it as long as she could, and then ran boldly across to join the party, and hear what they were having so much fun about

But it was all an enigma to Kitty. Dr. Jeremy was talking with Mr. Bruce concerning something which had happened many years ago; there was a great deal about a fool's cap, with a long tassel, and taking afternoon naps in the grass. The doctor was making queer allusions to some old pear-tree, and traps set for thieves, and kept reminding Gertrude of circumstances which attended their first acquaintance with each other and with Mr Bruce

Kitty was beginning to feel that, as she was uninitiated in all they were talking about, she had placed herself in the position of an intruder, and was thereupon looking a little embarrassed and ill at ease, when Gertrude touched her arm, and kindly making room for her next herself, motioned to her to sit down, saying, as she did so, "Dr Jeremy is speaking of the time when he (or he and *I*, as he chooses to have it) went fruit-stealing in Mrs Bruce's orchard, and were unexpectedly discovered by Mr. Bruce."

"You mean, my dear," interrupted the doctor, "that Mr. Bruce was discovered by us Why, it's my opinion he would have slept until this time if I hadn't given him such a thorough waking-up."

"My first acquaintance with you was certainly the greatest awakening of my life," said Ben, speaking as if to the doctor, but looking meaningly at Gertrude "That was not the only nap it cost me. How sorry I am, Miss Gertrude, that you've given up working in the garden, as you used to!"

Kitty now addressed some remark to Mr Bruce on the subject of gardening, and Gertrude, turning to Dr Jeremy, continued in earnest conversation with him, until Mrs Jeremy rose to go, when, approaching the window, she said:

"Dr. Jerry, have you given Gertrude her letter?"

"Goodness me!" exclaimed the doctor, "I came near forgetting it" Then feeling in his pocket, he drew forth an evidently foreign document, the envelope literally covered with various coloured post-office stamps "See here, Gerty, genuine Calcutta; no mistake."

Gertrude took the letter, and, as she thanked the doctor, her countenance expressed pleasure at receiving it—a pleasure, however, tempered by sadness, for she had heard from Willie but once since he learned of his mother's death, and that letter had been such an outpouring of grief, that the sight of his handwriting almost pained her, as she anticipated something like a repetition of the outburst

Mr Bruce, who kept his eyes upon her, and half expected to see her change colour, and look disconcerted, on the letter being handed to her in the presence of so many witnesses, was reassured by the composure with which she took it, and held it openly in her hand, while she bade the doctor and his wife good-evening. She followed them to the door, and was then retreating to her own apartment, when she was met at the foot of the stairs by Mr Bruce, who asked if her letter was of such importance that she must deny the company the pleasure of her society in order to study its contents.

"It is from a friend of whose welfare I am anxious to hear," said Gertrude gravely. "Please excuse me to your mother, if she enquires for me"

"Oh, Miss Gertrude" said Mr. Bruce, "it's no use coming here to see you, you are so frequently invisible What part of the day is one most likely to find you disengaged?"

"Hardly any part," said Gertrude. "I am always very busy; but good-night, Mr. Bruce. Don't let me detain you from the other young ladies," and Gertrude ran upstairs, leaving Mr Bruce uncertain whether to be vexed with himself or her.

Contrary to Gerty's expectations, her letter from William Sullivan proved very soothing to the grief she had felt on his account. She was much relieved to find that he now wrote in a calmer strain; that he had taken to heart his mother's last entreaty and prayer for a submissive disposition on his part, and that, although deeply afflicted, he was schooling himself to patience and resignation But he did not, in this letter, dwell long upon his own sufferings under bereavement

The three closely written pages were almost wholly devoted to fervent and earnest expressions of gratitude to Gertrude for the active kindness and love which had cheered and comforted the last days of his much-regretted friends. He prayed that

Heaven would bless her, and reward her disinterested and self-denying efforts, and closed with saying:

"You are all there is left to me, Gertrude. If I loved you before, my heart is now bound to you by ties stronger than those of earth; my hopes, my labours, my prayers, are all for you God grant that we may some day meet again!"

For an hour after she had finished reading, Gertrude sat lost in meditation, her thoughts went back to her home at Uncle True's, and the days when she and Willie passed so many happy hours in close companionship, little dreaming of the long separation so soon to ensue. She rehearsed in her mi ' 'l the succeeding events which had brought her into her present position, and was only startled at last from the reverie she was indulging in by the voices of Mrs Graham's visitors, who were now taking leave

Mrs. Bruce and her son lingered a little, until the carriages had driven off with those of the guests who were to return to the city, and, as they were making their farewells on the doorstep, directly beneath Gertrude's window, she heard Mrs Graham say:

"Remember, Mr. Bruce, we dine at two; and Miss Fanny, we shall hope to see you also. I presume you will join the walking party"

This, then, was an arrangement which was to bring Mr Bruce there to dinner, at no very distant period; and Gertrude's reflections, forsaking the past, began to centre upon the present

Mr. Bruce's attentions to her had that day been marked, and the professions of admiration he had contrived to whisper in her ear had been still more so Both these attentions and this admiration were unsought and undesired; neither were they in any degree flattering to the high-minded girl, who was superior to coquetry, and whose self-respect was even wounded by the confident and assured manner in which Mr. Bruce made his advances

His earnestness and perseverance had begun to annoy the object of his admiration before she left Mr. Graham's in the autumn, and she was glad soon after to hear that he had accompanied his mother to Washington, as it ensured her against meeting him again for months to come

On the day succeeding the one of which we have been speaking, Mr Graham returned from the city about noon. Joining the young ladies in the entry, he unfolded his newspaper, and, handing it to Kitty, asked her to read the news

"What shall I read?" said Kitty.

"The leading article, if you please"

Kitty turned the paper inside and out, looked hastily up and down its pages, and then declared her inability to find it Mr. Graham stared at her with astonishment, and then pointed in silence to the wished-for article She began, but had scarcely read a sentence before Mr Graham stopped her, saying impatiently.

"Don't read so fast—I can't hear a single word!"

She now fell into the other extreme, and drawled so intolerably that her auditor interrupted her again

"Where's Gertrude?" he asked. "She's the only girl I ever saw that did know anything Won't you call her, Kitty?"

Kitty went to call Gertrude, and told her for what she was wanted Gertrude was astonished, but, obedient to his summons, she presented herself, and commenced with the ship-news, and without asking any questions, turned to various items of intelligence, taking them in the order which she knew Mr. Graham preferred.

The old gentleman, leaning back in his easy-chair, looked amazingly contented and satisfied, and when Belle and Kitty had gone off to their room, he remarked:

"This seems like old times, doesn't it, Gertrude?"

He now closed his eyes, and Gertrude was soon made aware, by his deep breathing, that he had fallen asleep.

Seeing that, as he sat, it would be impossible for her to pass without waking him, she laid down the paper, and was preparing to draw some work from her pocket, when she observed a shadow in the doorway, and, looking up, saw the very person whom she had yesterday resolved to avoid.

Mr. Bruce was staring in her face, with an indolent air of ease and confidence, which she always found very offensive He had in one hand a bunch of roses, which he held up to her admiring gaze.

"Very beautiful!" said Gertrude, as she glanced at the little branches, covered with a luxurious growth of moss rose-buds, both pink and white

She spoke in a low voice, fearing to awaken Mr. Graham. Mr. Bruce, therefore, softening his to a whisper, remarked, "I thought they were pretty when I gathered them, but they suffer from the comparison, Miss Gertrude;" and he gave a meaning look at the roses in her cheeks.

Gertrude, to whom this was a stale compliment, took no notice of it, but, rising, advanced to make her exit by the front door, saying, "I will send the ladies word that you are here, Mr. Bruce."

"O, pray don't!" said he, putting himself in her way. "It would be cruel; I haven't the slightest wish to see them"

He so effectually prevented her, that she was unwillingly compelled to resume her seat and her work.

Mr. Bruce looked his triumph, and took advantage of it.

"Miss Gertrude," said he, "will you oblige me by wearing these flowers in your hair to-day?"

"I do not wear gay flowers," replied Gertrude, without lifting her eyes from her work.

Supposing this to be on account of her mourning, he selected the white buds from the rest, and, presenting them to her, begged that for his sake she would display them in contrast with her dark silken braids

"I am much obliged to you," said Gertrude; "I never saw more beautiful roses, but I am not accustomed to be so much dressed, and beg to be excused."

"Then you won't take my flowers?"

"Certainly I will, with pleasure," said she, rising, "if you will let me get a glass of water, and place them in the parlour."

"I did not cut my flowers, and bring them here, for the benefit of the whole household," said Ben "If you won't wear them, Miss Gertrude, I will offer them to somebody that will"

This he thought would alarm her, for his vanity was such that he attributed her behaviour wholly to coquetry.

"I will punish her," thought he, as he tied the roses together again, and arranged them for presentation to Kitty, who, he knew, would be flattered to receive them

A short silence ensued, and then Gertrude exclaimed, "Ah! here is an old friend coming to see us! Please let me pass, Mr Bruce"

The gate at the end of the yard swung to as she spoke, and Ben beheld approaching the person whom Gertrude wished to go and meet

"Don't be in such a hurry to leave me!" said he "That little crone, whose coming seems to give you so much satisfaction, can't get here this half-hour, at the rate she is travelling"

"She is an old friend," replied Gertrude; "I must go and welcome her" Her countenance expressed so much earnestness that Mr. Bruce was ashamed to persist in his incivility, and, rising, permitted her to pass Miss Patty Pace—for she it was who was toiling up the yard—seemed overjoyed at seeing Gertrude, and the moment she recognized her commenced waving a huge feather fan. As she drew near, Miss Patty took her by both hands, and stood talking with her some minutes before

they proceeded together up the yard. They entered the hous[e] at the side door, and Ben, being thus disappointed of Gertrude's return, went into the garden, in hopes to attract the notice of Kitty.

Ben Bruce had such confidence in the power of wealth, and a high station in fashionable life, that it never occurred to him to doubt that Gertrude would gladly accept his hand and fortune, if they were placed at her disposal. He had not made his mind up to such an important step, however, as the deliberate surrender of the many advantages of which he was the fortunate possessor. He had merely determined to win Gertrude's good opinion and affection; and, although more interested in her than he was aware of himself, he at present made that his ultimate object. He felt conscious that as yet she had given no evidence of his success; and having resolved to resort to some new means of winning her, he, with a too common selfishness and baseness, fixed upon a method which was calculated, if successful, to end in the mortification, if not the unhappiness, of a third party. He intended, by marked devotion to Kitty Ray, to excite the jealousy of Gertrude; and it was with the view to furthering his intentions that he walked into the garden hoping to attract her observation.

CHAPTER XXIX

TRUE POLITENESS

A half-hour before dinner, Mrs. Graham and her nieces, Mr. Bruce, his sister Fanny, and a Lieutenant Osborne, as they sat in the large room, had their curiosity much excited by the merriment which seemed to exist in Emily's room directly above. It was not noisy or rude, but strikingly genuine. Gertrude's clear laugh was very distinguishable, and even Emily joined frequently in the outburst which would every now and then occur; while still another person appeared to be of the party, as a strange and most singular voice occasionally mingled with the rest. Kitty ran to the entry two or three times to listen, and hear, if possible, the subject of their mirth, and at last returned with the announcement that Gertrude was coming downstairs with the very queen of witches.

Presently Gertrude ushered in Miss Patty Pace, who advanced

with measured, mincing steps to Mrs. Graham, and stopping in front of her, made a low curtesy.

"How do you do, ma'am?" said Mrs. Graham, half inclining to believe that Gertrude was playing off a joke upon her.

"This, I presume, is the mistress," said Miss Patty.

Mrs Graham acknowledged her claim to that title.

"A lady of presence!" said Miss Patty to Gertrude, in an audible whisper Then, turning towards Belle, who was shrinking into the shadow of a curtain, she approached her, held up both hands in astonishment, and exclaimed, "Miss Isabella, as I still enjoy existence! and radiant, too, as the morning! Bless my heart! how your youthful charms have expanded!"

Belle had recognized Miss Pace the moment she entered the room, but, with foolish pride, was ashamed to acknowledge the acquaintance of so eccentric an individual, and would have still feigned ignorance, but Kitty now came forward, exclaiming, "Why, Miss Pace, where did you come from?"

"Miss Catharina," said Miss Pace, taking her hands, "*then you knew me*! Blessings on your memory of an old friend!"

"Certainly, I knew you in a minute. You're not so easily forgotten, I assure you. Belle, don't you remember Miss Pace? It's at your house I've always seen her."

"O, is it she?" said Belle, with a poor attempt to conceal the fact that she had any previous knowledge of a person who had been a frequent visitor at her father's house, and was held in esteem by both her parents

"I apprehend," said Miss Patty to Kitty, in the same loud whisper, "that she carries a proud heart"—Then, without having appeared to notice the gentlemen, who were directly behind her, she added, "Sparks, I see, Miss Catharina—young sparks! Whose? Yours, or hers?"

Kitty laughed, for she saw that the young men heard her, and were much amused, and replied, without hesitation, "O, mine, Miss Patty, mine, both of 'em!"

At the table, Gertrude, seated next to Emily, whose wants she always made her care, and with Miss Patty on the other side, had no time or attention to bestow on anyone else; much to the chagrin of Mr Bruce, who was anxious she should observe his assiduous devotion to Kitty, whose hair was adorned with the moss rose-buds, and her face with smiles.

Belle was also made happy by the marked admiration of her young officer, and no one felt any disposition to interfere with either of the well-satisfied girls Occasionally, however, some remark made by Miss Pace irresistibly attracted the attention

of everyone at the table, and extorted either the laughter it was intended to excite, or a mirth which, though perhaps ill-timed, it was impossible to repress

Mr. Graham treated Miss Patty with the most marked politeness and attention, and Mrs Graham, who was possessed of great suavity of manners when she chose to exercise it, and who loved dearly to be amused, spared no pains to bring out the old lady's conversational powers

After dinner the gentlemen soon followed the ladies into the wide entry, the refreshing coolness of which invited everyone to loiter there during the heat of the day Miss Patty and Fanny Bruce compelled the unwilling Gertrude to join the group there assembled, and Mrs Graham, who was never disposed to forego her afternoon nap, was the only member of the family who absented herself.

So universal was the interest Miss Patty excited, that all private dialogue was suspended, and close attention given to whatever topic the old lady was discussing.

Belle maintained a slightly scornful expression of countenance, and tried with partial success to divert Lieutenant Osborne's thoughts into another channel, but Kitty was so delighted with Miss Pace's originality, that she made no attempt at any exclusive conversation, and, with Mr. Bruce sitting beside her and joining in her amusement, looked more than contented

After a while the conversation turned on politeness, and Miss Pace took up the word and said—

"Politeness! Ah! a lovely but rare virtue; perceptibly developed, however, in the manners of my friend Gertrude, which I hesitate not to affirm would well become a princess"

Belle curled her lip and smiled disdainfully. "Lieutenant Osborne," said she, "don't you think Miss Devereux has beautiful manners?"

"Very fine," replied the lieutenant, "the style in which she receives company on her reception-day is elegance itself."

"Who are you speaking of?" enquired Kitty; "Mrs Harry Noble?"

"Miss Devereux we were remarking upon," said Belle; "but Mrs Noble is also very stylish"

"I think she is," said Mr Bruce "Do you hear, Fanny?—we have found a model for you—you must imitate Mrs. Noble"

"I don't know anything about Mrs Noble," retorted Fanny; "I'd rather imitate Miss Flint Miss Gertrude," said she, "how *shall* I learn politeness?"

"Do you remember," asked Gertrude, speaking low, and giving Fanny a look full of meaning, "what your music-master told you about learning to *play* with expression? I should give you the same rule for improvement in politeness."

Fanny blushed deeply.

"What is that?" said Mr. Graham. "Let us know, Fanny, what is *Gertrude's* rule for politeness?"

"She only said," answered Fanny, "that it was the same my music-master gave me last winter."

"And what did *he* say?" enquired her brother, with a tone of interest

"I asked Mr. Hermann," said Fanny, "how should I learn to play with expression, and he said, 'You must cultivate your *heart*, Miss Bruce'."

This new direction for the attainment of a great accomplishment was received with countenances that indicated as great a variety of sentiment as there was difference of character among Fanny's audience. Emily's face evidenced how fully she coincided in the opinion thus unintentionally made public, and Miss Patty unhesitatingly expressed her approbation.

"Miss Gertrude's remark is undeniably a verity," said she "The only politeness which is trustworthy is the spontaneous offering of the heart. Perhaps this goodly company of masters and misses would condescend to give ear to an old woman's tale of a rare instance of true politeness, and the fitting reward it met"

All professed a strong desire to hear Miss Patty's story, and she began—

"On a winter's day, some years ago, an old woman, of many foibles and besetting weaknesses, but with a keen eye and her share of worldly wisdom—Miss Patty Pace by name—started, by special invitation, for the house of one worshipful Squire Clinton, the honoured parent of Miss Isabella. Every tall tree in our good city was spangled with frost-work, more glittering far than gems that sparkle in Golconda's mine, and the side-walks were a snare to the feet of the old and the unwary.

"I lost my equilibrium and fell. Two gallant gentlemen lifted and carried me to a neighbouring apothecary's emporium, restored my scattered wits, and revived me with a fragrant cordial. I went on my way with many a misgiving, however, and scarcely should I have reached my destination with bones unbroken, had it not been for a knight with a rosy countenance, who overtook me, placed my old arm within his own more strong and youthful one, and protected my steps to the very end of my journey. No slight

courage either, my young misses, did my noble escort need to carry him through what he had undertaken Paint to your imaginations a youth, fresh and beautiful as a sunbeam, straight as an arrow—a perfect Apollo, indeed—linked to the little bent body of poor Miss Patty Pace. But he went on unmoved, and, in spite of many a captivating glance and smile from long rows of beautiful young maidens whom we met, and many a sneer from youths of his own age, he sustained my feeble form with as much care as if I had been an empress, and accommodated his buoyant step to the slow movement which my infirmities compelled Ah! what a spirit of conformity he manifested!—my knight of the rosy countenance! Could you have seen him, Miss Catharina, or you, Miss Frances, your palpitating hearts would have taken flight for ever. He was a paragon, indeed

"Whither his own way tended I cannot say, for he moved in conformity to mine, and left me not until I was safe at the abode of Mistress Clinton I hardly think he coveted my old heart, but I sometimes believe it followed him, for truly he is still a frequent subject of my meditations"

"Ah! then *that* was his reward?" exclaimed Kitty.

"Not so, Miss Kitty; guess again"

"I can think of *nothing so desirable*, Miss Patty."

"His *fortune in life*, Miss Catharina—that was his reward, it may be that he cannot yet estimate the full amount of his recompense."

"How so?" exclaimed Fanny.

"I will briefly narrate the rest Mistress Clinton encouraged me always to converse much in her presence. I told my story, and enlarged upon the merits of my noble youth, and his wonderful spirit of conformity. The squire, a gentleman who estimates good breeding, was present, with his ears open; and when I recommended my knight, with all the eloquence I could command, he was amused, interested, pleased He promised to see the boy, and did so, the noble features spake for themselves, and gained him a situation as clerk, from which he has since advanced in the ranks, until now he occupies the position of partner and confidential agent in a creditable and wealthy house Miss Isabella, it would rejoice my heart to hear the latest tidings from Mr. William Sullivan"

"He is well, I believe," said Isabella sulkily. "I know nothing to the contrary"

"O, Gertrude knows," said Fanny. "Gertrude knows all about Mr Sullivan She will tell you."

All turned and looked at Gertrude, who, with face flushed and

eyes glistening with the interest she felt in Miss Patty's narrative, stood leaning upon Emily's chair. Miss Patty now appealed to her, much surprised, however, at her having any knowledge of her much-admired and well-remembered young escort

Gertrude gave her a brief account of the wonder and curiosity which Willie and his friends had felt concerning the original author of his good fortune; and the old lady was so entertained and delighted at hearing of the various conjectures and doubts which arose on the reception of Mr. Clinton's unexpected summons, and of the matter being finally attributed to the agency of Santa Claus, that her laugh was nearly as loud, and quite as heart-felt, as that of the gay party near the doorstep, whom Kitty and Fanny had excited to unusual merriment.

CHAPTER XXX

VANITY

And now days and even weeks passed on, and no marked event took place in Mr Graham's household The weather became intensely warm, and no more walks and drives were planned. The lieutenant left the neighbouring city, which was at this season nearly deserted by the friends of Mrs Graham and her nieces, and Isabel, who could neither endure with patience excessive heat nor want of society, grew more irritable and fretful than ever

To Kitty, however, these summer days were fraught with interest. Mr. Bruce remained in the neighbourhood, visited constantly at the house, and exercised a marked influence upon her outward demeanour and her inward happiness, which were changeable and fluctuating as his attentions were freely bestowed or altogether suspended Acting as he did almost wholly with reference to Gertrude, it was only in her presence, or under such circumstances that he was sure it would reach her ears, that he manifested a marked interest in Kitty; and his behaviour was, therefore, in the highest degree unequal, leading the warm-hearted Kitty to believe one moment that he felt for her almost the tenderness of a lover, and the next to suffer under the apprehension of having unconsciously wounded or offended him by her careless gaiety or conversation

Gertrude, whose eyes were soon opened to the existing state of

things, was filled with regret and apprehension on account of Kitty, for whose peace and welfare she felt a tender and affectionate concern

Gertrude availed herself of every opportunity to acquaint Ben with the truth, that he could not possibly render himself more odious in her eyes than by the use of such mean attempts to mortify her, but attributing her warmth to the very feeling of jealousy which he desired to excite, the selfish young man persevered in his course of folly and wickedness As he only proffered his attentions, and made no offer of his heart and hand, Gertrude did not in the least trust his professions towards *herself*, considering them merely as intended, if possible, to move her from her firm and consistent course of behaviour, in order to gratify his self-love. But she saw plainly that, however light and vain his motives might be in her own case, they were still more so with reference to Kitty, and she was deeply grieved at the evident unconsciousness of this fact which the simple girl constantly exhibited.

For, strangely enough, Kitty having quite forgotten that she had a few weeks back looked upon Gertrude as a rival, now chose her for her bosom friend and confidant. If she saw Gertrude walking in the garden, or sitting alone in her room, she would approach, throw her arm around her, lean against her shoulder, and talk on her favourite topic She would relate, with a mixture of simplicity and folly, the complimentary speeches and polite attentions of Mr Bruce She would ask if Gertrude really supposed he meant all he said, and add, that of course *she* didn't believe he did—it was all nonsense. And if Gertrude embraced the opportunity to avow the same opinion, and declare that it was best not to trust all his high-flown flatteries, poor Kitty's face would fall, and she would proceed to give her reasons for *sometimes* thinking he was sincere, he had such a *truthful*, *earnest* way of speaking

It was no use to throw out hints, or try to establish safeguards. Kitty was completely infatuated. At last Mr Bruce thought proper to try Gertrude's firmness by offering to her acceptance a rich ring. Not a little surprised at his presumption, she declined it without hesitation or ceremony, and the next day saw it on the finger of Kitty, who was eager to give an account of its presentation.

"And did you *accept* it?" asked Gertrude, with such a look of astonishment, that Kitty observed it and evaded an acknowledgment of having done so by saying, with a blushing countenance, that she agreed to wear it a little while

"I wouldn't," said Gertrude

"Why not?"

"Because, in the first place, I do not think it is in good taste to receive rich gifts from gentlemen, and then, again, if strangers notice it, you may be subjected to unpleasant remarks."

"What would you do with it?" asked Kitty

"I should give it back"

Kitty looked very undecided, but on reflection, concluded to offer it to Mr Bruce, and tell him what Gertrude said She did so, and that gentleman, little appreciating Gertrude's motives, and believing her only desirous of making difficulty between him and Kitty, jumped at the conclusion that her heart was won at last, and that his triumph would now be complete He was disappointed, therefore, when, on his next meeting with her, she treated him, as she had invariably done of late, with cool civility, indeed, it seemed to him that she was more insensible than ever to his attractions, and, hastily quitting the house, he sought his old haunt under the pear-tree, and gave himself up to the consideration of a weighty question

"Shall I," thought he, "conclude to marry this poor girl? Shall I, who am master of a handsome fortune, forego the prospect they afford me of making a brilliant alliance, and condescend to share my wealth and station in society with this adopted child of the Grahams, who, in spite of her poverty, will not grant me a smile even? If she were one atom less charming, I would disappoint her after all! I wonder how I ever got in love with her;—I'm sure I don't know She isn't handsome, at least, mother thinks she isn't, and so does Belle Clinton But then, again, Lieutenant Osborne noticed her the minute she came into the room; and there's Fan raves about her beauty. I don't know what I think myself, I believe she's bewitched me, so that I'm not capable of judging; but, if it isn't beauty, it is because it's something more than mere good looks"

For a few days after he arrived at a resolve on this point, he had no opportunity to address a word to Gertrude, who was now doubly anxious to avoid him, and spent nearly the whole day above-stairs, except when, at Emily's request, she accompanied her for a short time into the parlour, and even then she took pains, under some pretext or other, to remain close by the side of her blind friend

About this time Mrs Graham and Mrs Bruce, with their families, received cards for a levee to be held at the house of an acquaintance nearly five miles distant. It was on the

occasion of the marriage of a schoolmate of Isabel's, and both she and Kitty were desirous to be present

The prospect of a gay assembly, and an opportunity for display, revived Isabel's drooping spirits and energy. Her rich evening dresses were brought out for the selection of the most suitable and becoming; and as she stood before her mirror, and tried on first one wreath and then another, and looked so beautiful in each that it was difficult to make a choice, Kitty, who stood by, eagerly endeavouring to win her attention, and obtain her advice concerning the style and colour most desirable for herself, gave up in despair, and ran off to consult Gertrude.

She found her reading in her own room, but, on Kitty's abrupt entrance, she laid down her book.

"Gertrude," said Kitty, "what shall I wear this evening? I've been trying to get Belle to tell me, but she never will speak a word, or hear what I ask her, when she's thinking about her own dress"

"Who advises *her*?" asked Gertrude.

"O, nobody, she always decides for herself, but then she has so much taste. So do tell me, Gertrude, what had I better wear to-night?"

"I'm the last person you should ask, Kitty, I never went to a fashionable party in my life"

"That doesn't make any difference I'm sure if you did go, you'd look better than any of us, and I'm not afraid to trust to your opinion, for I never in my life saw you wear anything that didn't look genteel—even your gingham morning-gown has a sort of stylish air."

"Stop, stop, Kitty! You are going too far; you must keep within bounds, if you want me to believe you."

"Well, then," said Kitty, "to say nothing of yourself—who furnishes Miss Emily's wardrobe? Who selects her dresses?"

"I have done so lately, but——"

"I thought so!" interrupted Kitty "I knew poor Miss Emily was indebted to you for always looking so nice and so beautiful"

"No, indeed, Kitty, you are mistaken, I have never seen Emily better dressed than she was the first time I met her; and her beauty is not borrowed from art—it is all her own."

"No, indeed! That is what I like."

"But your dress?" said Gertrude.

"O, yes! I had almost forgotten what I came for," said Kitty "What shall it be, then—thick or thin, pink, blue, or white?"

"What has Isabel decided upon?"

"Blue—a rich blue silk; that is her favourite colour always, but it doesn't become me."

"No, I should think not," said Gertrude; "but come, Kitty, we will go to your room and see the dresses, and I will give my opinion."

Kitty's wardrobe having been inspected, and Gertrude having expressed her preference for a thin, flowing material, a delicate white crape was fixed upon. And now there was a new difficulty; among all her headdresses none proved satisfactory—all were more or less defaced, and none of them to be compared with a new and exquisite wreath which Isabel was arranging among her curls

"I cannot wear any of them," said Kitty, "they look so mean by the side of Isabel's; but, O!" exclaimed she, glancing at a box which lay on the dressing-table, "these are just what I should like! O, Isabel, where did you get these beautiful carnations?" and she took up some flowers, which were, indeed, a rare imitation of nature, and, displaying them to Gertrude, added that they were just what she wanted.

"O, Kitty;" said Isabel angrily, turning away from the glass, and observing what her cousin had in her hand, "don't touch my flowers! You will spoil them!" and, snatching them from her, she replaced them in the box—an action which Gertrude witnessed with astonishment, not unmingled with indignation

"Kitty," said she, "I will arrange a wreath of natural flowers for you"

"Will you, Gertrude?" said the disappointed Kitty. "O, that will be delightful! I should like it of all things!"

True to her promise, Gertrude prepared a headdress for Kitty, and so tastefully did she mingle the choicest productions of the garden that, when Isabel saw her cousin arrayed under a more careful and affectionate superintendence than she often enjoyed, she felt, notwithstanding her own proud consciousness of superior beauty, a sharp pang of jealousy of Kitty, and dislike to Gertrude

CHAPTER XXXI

THE REJECTED

Emily was not well this evening, and after Mrs Graham and her nieces had gone downstairs to await Mr Graham's pleasure and Mrs Bruce's arrival, Gertrude returned to Emily, whom she had left only a short time before, and found her suffering more than usual from what she termed her troublesome head. After they had departed Gertrude sat some time longer, when, finding Emily had gone to sleep, quietly rising, and arranging everything for the night, according to Emily's well-known wishes, she closed the door gently behind her, sought a book in her own room, and entering the vacant parlour, went to the open glass doors, placed herself near them, and, leaning her head upon her hand, became absorbed in meditation

She had not long sat thus when she heard a footstep in the room, and, turning, saw Mr. Bruce beside her She started, and exclaimed, "Mr Bruce! is it possible? I thought you had gone to the wedding"

"No, there were greater attractions for me at home Could you believe, Miss Gertrude, I should find any pleasure in a party which did not include yourself?"

"I certainly should not have the vanity to suppose the reverse," replied Gertrude"

"I wish you had a little more vanity, Miss Gertrude. Perhaps then you would sometimes believe what I say"

"I am glad you have the candour to acknowledge, Mr. Bruce, that, without that requisite, one would find it impossible to put faith in your fair speeches."

"I acknowledge no such thing I only say to you what any other girl but yourself would be willing enough to believe But how shall I persuade you to converse freely with me, and no longer shun my society?"

"By addressing me with simple truthfulness, and sparing me those words and attentions which I have endeavoured to convince you are unacceptable to me and unworthy of yourself"

"But I have a meaning, Gertrude, a *deep* meaning I have been trying for several days to find an opportunity to tell you of my resolve, and you *must* listen to me now," for he saw her change colour and look anxious and uneasy. "You must give me an answer at once, and one that will, I trust, be favourable to my wishes You like plain speaking, and I will be plain

enough. My relatives and friends may talk and wonder as much as they please at my choosing a wife who has neither money nor family to boast of; but I have determined to defy them all, and offer, without hesitation, to share my prospects with you. As to the world, I don't see but that you can hold your head as high as anybody, Gertrude; so, if you've no objection to make, we'll play at cross purposes no longer, and consider the thing settled," and he endeavoured to take her hand.

But Gertrude drew back; the colour flushed her cheeks, and her eyes glistened as she fixed them upon his face with an expression of astonishment and pride that could not be mistaken

The calm, penetrating look of those dark eyes spoke volumes, and Mr Bruce replied to their enquiring gaze in these words: "I hope you are not displeased at my frankness"

"With your frankness," said Gertrude calmly, "no; that is a thing that never displeases me. But what have I unconsciously done to inspire you with so much confidence that, while you defend yourself for defying the wishes of your friends, you hardly give me a voice in the matter?"

"Nothing," said Bruce, in an apologizing tone; "but I thought you had laboured under the impression that I was disposed to trifle with your affections, and had therefore kept aloof and maintained a distance towards me which you would not have done had you known how much I was in earnest; but, believe me, I only admired you the more for behaving with so much dignity, and if I have presumed upon your favour, you must forgive me"

The expression of wounded pride vanished from Gertrude's face "He knows no better," thought she, "I should pity his vanity and ignorance, and sympathize in his disappointment," and in disclaiming with a positiveness which left no room for further self-deception any interest in Mr. Bruce beyond that of an old acquaintance and sincere well-wisher, she nevertheless softened her refusal by the choice of the mildest language, and terms the least likely to grieve or mortify him

She almost felt, however, as if her thoughtfulness for his feelings had been thrown away, when she perceived the spirit in which he received her refusal

"Gertrude," said he, "you are either trifling with me or yourself If you are still disposed to coquet with me, I desire to have it understood that I shall not humble myself to urge you further, but if, on the other hand, you are so far forgetful of your own interests as deliberately to refuse such a fortune as mine, I think it's a pity you haven't got some friend to advise you. Such

a chance doesn't occur every day, especially to poor schoolmistresses, and if you are so foolish as to overlook it, I'll venture to say you'll never have another."

Gertrude's *old temper* rose at this insulting language, and beat and throbbed in her chafed spirit; but, though this was an unlooked-for and unwonted rebellion of an old enemy, her feelings had too long been under strict regulation to yield to the blast, and she replied in a tone which, though slightly agitated, was far from being angry, "Allowing I could so far forget *myself*, Mr. Bruce, I would not do *you* such an injustice as to marry you for your fortune. I do not despise wealth, for I know the blessing it may often be; but my affections cannot be bought with gold," and as she spoke she moved towards the door.

"Stay!" said Mr. Bruce, catching her hand. "Listen to me one moment; let me ask one question Are you jealous of my late attentions to another?"

"No," answered Gertrude; "but I confess I have not understood your motives."

"Did you think," asked he, "that I cared for that silly Kitty? Did you believe, for a moment, that I had any other desire than to show you that my devotion was acceptable elsewhere? No, upon my word, I never had the least particle of regard for her; my heart has been yours all the time, and I only danced attendance upon *her*, in hopes to win a glance from *you*—an *anxious* glance, if might be But as to *loving* her—pooh! Mrs Graham's poodle-dog might as well try to rival you as that soft——"

"Stop! stop!" exclaimed Gertrude; "for *my* sake, if not for your *own*! O, how——" She could say no more; but, sinking into the nearest seat, burst into tears, and hiding her face in her hands, wept without restraint

Mr Bruce stood by in utter amazement, at last he approached her, and asked, in a low voice, "What is the matter? what have I done?"

It was some minutes before she could reply to the question; then, lifting her head, and tossing the hair from her forehead, she displayed features expressive only of the deepest grief, and said, in broken accents, "What have you done? O, how can you ask? She is gentle, and amiable, and affectionate She loves everybody, and trusts everybody. You have *deceived* her, and *I* was the cause of it O, how, how could you do it?"

A most disconcerted appearance did Ben present at her words, and hesitating was the tone in which he muttered. "She will get over it."

"Get over *what?*" said Gertrude—"her love for you? Perhaps so, I know not how deep it is. But, think of her happy, trusting nature, and how it has been betrayed! Think how her confidence has been abused! how that fatherless and motherless girl, who had a claim to the sympathy of all the world, has been taught a lesson of distrust"

"I didn't think you would take it so," said Ben.

"How else could I view it?" asked Gertrude. "Could you expect that such a course would win my respect?"

"You take it very seriously, such flirtations are common"

"I am sorry to hear it," said Gertrude "To my mind it is a dreadful thing to trifle thus with a human heart Whether Kitty loves you is not for me to say; but what opinion—alas!—will she have of your sincerity?"

"I think you're rather hard, Miss Gertrude, when it was my love for you that prompted my conduct"

"Perhaps I am," said Gertrude "It is not my place to censure; I speak only from the impulse of my heart Perhaps she views the thing lightly, and does not *need* an advocate; but, O, Mr. Bruce, do not think so meanly of my sex as to believe that one woman's heart can be won to love and reverence by the author of another's betrayal! She were less than woman who could be so false to her sense of right and honour."

"Betrayal!—Nonsense! you are very high-flown"

"So much so, Mr Bruce, that half an hour ago I could have wept that you should have bestowed your affection where it met with no requital, and if now I weep for the sake of her whose ears have listened to false professions, and whose peace has, to say the least, been *threatened* on my account, you should attribute it to the fact that my sympathies have not been exhausted by contact with the world"

Ben went a step or two towards the door, then stopped, came back, and said, "After all, Gertrude Flint, I believe the time will come when your notions will grow less romantic, and you will look back to this night and wish you had acted differently."

Immediately upon this remark he left the room, and Gertrude heard him shut the hall door with a loud bang as he went out

A moment after, the silence that ensued was disturbed by a slight sound which seemed to proceed from the deep recess in the window Gertrude started, and as she went towards the spot, heard distinctly a smothered sob She lifted a draperied curtain, and there, upon the wide window-seat, her head bent over and buried in the cushions, and her little slender form

distorted into a strange and forlorn attitude, sat, or rather crouched, poor Kitty Ray. The crumpled folds of her white crape dress, her withered wreath, her disordered hair, and her little hand clinging to a thick cord connected with the window-curtain, all added to the appearance of extreme distress

"Kitty!" cried Gertrude.

At the sound of her voice, Kitty sprung suddenly from her recumbent posture, threw herself into Gertrude's arms, laid her head upon her shoulder, and though she did not, *could* not weep, shook and trembled with an agitation which was perfectly uncontrollable. Her hand, which grasped Gertrude's, was fearfully cold, her eyes seemed fixed; and, occasionally, at intervals, the same hysterical sound which had at first betrayed her in her hiding-place alarmed her young protector, to whom she clung as if seized with sudden fear. Gertrude supported her to a seat, and then, folding the slight form to her bosom, chafed the cold hands, and again and again kissing the rigid lips, succeeded at last in restoring her to something like composure. Finally, finding her completely prostrated, both in mind and body, Gertrude passed her arm around her waist, guided her upstairs, and took her into her own room, where, if she proved wakeful, she would be spared the wonder and scrutiny of Isabel Still clinging to Gertrude, the poor girl, to whose relief tears came at last, sobbed herself to sleep; and all her sufferings were for a time forgotten in that oblivion in which childhood and youth find a temporary rest, and often a healing balm to pain.

It was otherwise, however, with Gertrude, who, though of nearly the same age as Kitty, had seen too much trouble, experienced too much care, to enjoy, in times of disquiet, the privilege of sinking easily to repose She seated herself, therefore, at the window, and was pained to observe that Kitty tossed restlessly on her pillows, and occasionally muttered in her sleep, as if distressed by uneasy dreams It was past midnight when Mrs Graham and her niece returned home, and Gertrude went immediately to inform the latter that her cousin was asleep in her room The noise of the carriages, however, had awakened the sleeper, and when Gertrude returned she was rubbing her eyes, and trying to collect her thoughts.

Suddenly the recollection of the scene of the evening flashed upon her, and with a deep sigh she exclaimed, "O, Gertrude, I have been dreaming of Mr. Bruce! Should you have thought he would have treated me so?"

"No, I should not," said Gertrude; "but I wouldn't dream about him, Kitty, nor think of him any more."

"It is different with you," said Kitty, with simplicity. "He loves you, and you do not care for him; but I—I——" Here her feelings overpowered her, and she buried her face in her pillow

Gertrude approached, laid her hand kindly upon the head of the poor girl, and finished the sentence for her. "You have such a large heart, Kitty, that he found some place there, perhaps, but it is too good a heart to be shared by the mean and base. You must think no more of him—he is not worthy of your regard"

"I can't help it," said Kitty; "I am silly, as he said"

"No, you are not," said Gertrude, encouragingly; "and you must prove it to him"

"How?"

"Let him see that, with all her softness, Kitty Ray is strong and brave; that she has ceased to believe his flattery, and values his professions at what they are worth"

"Will you help me, Gertrude? You are my best friend May I come to you for comfort when I can't make believe happy any longer to him, and my aunt, and Isabel?"

Gertrude's fervent embrace was assurance enough of her co-operation and sympathy.

"You will be as bright and happy as ever in a few weeks," said she, "you will soon cease to care for a person whom you no longer respect"

Kitty disclaimed the possibility of ever being happy again, but Gertrude was much more sanguine and hopeful She saw that Kitty's violent outburst of sobs and tears was like a child's impetuous grief, and suspected that the deepest recesses of her nature were safe, and unendangered by the storm

She felt a deep compassion for her, however, and many fears lest she would be wanting in sufficient strength of mind to behave with dignity and womanly pride in her future intercourse with Mr Bruce, and would also expose herself to the ridicule of Isabel, and the contempt of her aunt, by betraying in her looks and behaviour her recent trying and mortifying experience

Fortunately, the first-mentioned trial was spared her, by Mr. Bruce's immediately absenting himself from the house, and in the course of a few days leaving home for the remainder of the summer.

A large proportion of Gertrude's time was necessarily devoted to her dearest and best friend, Emily; but there was nothing exclusive in Emily's nature; when not suffering from those bodily afflictions to which she was subject, she was ever ready to extend

a cordial welcome to all visitors who could find pleasure or benefit from her society.

Many a time, when Isabel had been tantalizing and wounding Kitty beyond what her patience could endure, and Gertrude had been vainly sought elsewhere, a little figure would present itself at the half-open door of Miss Graham's room, and was sure to hear the sweetest of voices saying from within, "I hear you Kitty; come in, my dear; we shall be glad of your pleasant company," and once there, seated by the side of Gertrude, learning from her some little art in needlework, listening to an agreeable book, or Emily's more agreeable conversation, Kitty passed hours which were never forgotten—so peaceful were they, so serene, so totally unlike any she had ever spent before Nor did they fail to leave a lasting impression upon her for the benefit of her mind and heart

The foolish child, whose heart was ensnared by the flatteries of Mr. Bruce, learned—partly through the example and precepts of her new counsellors and friends, and partly through her own bitter experience—the vanity and emptiness of the food thus administered to her mind, and resolving, for the first time in her life, to cultivate and cherish her immortal powers, she now developed the first germs of her better nature; which, expanding in later years, and through other influences, transformed the gay, fluttering, vain child of fashion, into the useful, estimable, and lovely woman.

CHAPTER XXXII

ENVY, HATRED, AND MALICE

Isabel, who had never liked one whose whole tone of action and life was a continual reproach to her own vanity and selfishness, and who saw in Gerty the additional crime of being the favoured friend of a youth of whose interesting boyhood she herself retained a sentimental recollection, was ready and eager to seize the earliest opportunity of rendering her odious in the eyes of Mrs Graham. She was not slow to observe the remarkable degree of confidence that seemed to exist between Kitty and Gertrude, and her resentment and anger excited still further by the growing friendship which her own coldness and unkindness to Kitty served only to strengthen and confirm, she hastened to communicate to Mrs Graham her suspicion that Gertrude had, for purposes of her own,

made a difficulty between Mr. Bruce and Kitty, and fostered and widened the breach, and succeeded at last in breaking off the match

Mrs Graham readily adopted Belle's opinion.

Thus leagued together, they endeavoured to surprise Kitty into a confession of the means which had been taken by Gertrude to drive away her lover and outwit herself. But Kitty, while she indignantly denied Gertrude's having thus injured her, persisted obstinately in refusing to reveal the occurrences of the eventful evening of the wedding levee.

Mrs Graham and Belle were now truly angry; and as day after day they became more and more incensed against Gertrude, so they gradually began to manifest it in their demeanour.

Gertrude soon perceived the incivility to which she was constantly subjected, with wonderful patience, however, did she preserve her equanimity She had never looked for kindness and attention from Mrs Graham and Isabel She had seen from the first that between herself and them here could be little sympathy, and now that they manifested open dislike, she struggled hard to maintain, on her part, not only self-command and composure, but a constant spirit of charity. It was well that she did not yield to this comparatively light trial of her forbearance, for a new, unexpected, and far more intense provocation was in store for her. Her malicious persecutors, incensed and irritated by an unlooked-for calmness and patience, which gave them no advantage in their one-sided warfare, now made their attack in another quarter, and Emily became the object against whom they aimed many of their shafts of unkindness and ill-will

Gertrude could bear injury, injustice, and even hard and cruel language, when exercised towards herself only, but her blood boiled in her veins when she began to perceive that her cherished Emily was becoming the victim of mean and petty neglect and ill-usage Mrs Graham was coarse and blunt, Isabel selfish and unfeeling, and long before the blind girl was herself aware of any unkind intention on their part, Gertrude's spirit had chafed and rebelled at the sight and knowledge of many a word and act well calculated, if perceived, to annoy and distress a sensitive and delicate spirit For some weeks Emily was kept ignorant of the fact that many a little office formerly performed for her by a servant was now fulfilled by Gertrude, who would not let her know that Bridget had received from her mistress orders which were quite inconsistent with her usual attendance upon Miss Graham's wants

Mr Graham was, at this time, absent from home; some diffi-

culty and anxiety in business matters having called him to New York His presence would have been a great restraint upon his wife, who was well aware of his devoted affection for his daughter Indeed, his love and thoughtfulness for Emily had early rendered her an object of jealousy to Mrs. Graham, who was therefore very willing to find ground of offence against her, and, in her case, as in Isabel's, the misunderstanding with Mr. Bruce, and their unworthy suspicions of its having been fostered by Gertrude, aided and abetted by Emily, furnished an ostensible motive for the indulgence of their animosity, and one of which they resolved to avail themselves to the utmost.

Shortly before Mr. Graham's return home, Mrs Graham and Isabel were sitting together, endeavouring to while away the tedious hours of a sultry August afternoon, when a letter was brought to Mrs Graham, which proved to be from her husband. After glancing over its contents, she remarked, with an air of satisfaction, "Here is good news for us, Isabel, and a prospect of some pleasure in the world" And she read aloud the following passage —"The troublesome affair which called me here is nearly settled, and I now see nothing to prevent our starting for Europe the latter part of next month, and the girls must make their arrangements accordingly. Tell Emily to spare nothing towards a full and complete equipment for herself and Gertrude"

"He speaks of Gertrude," said Isabel sneeringly, "as if she were one of the family. I'm sure I don't see any very great prospect of pleasure in travelling all through Europe with a blind woman and her disagreeable appendages"

"I wish he would leave them at home," said Mrs Graham; "it would be a good punishment for Gertrude But he would as soon think of going without his right hand as without Emily"

"I hope, if ever I am married," exclaimed Isabel, "it won't be to a man that's got a blind daughter. Such a dreadfully good person, too, whom everybody has got to worship and wait upon!"

"*I* don't have to wait upon her," said Mrs Graham, "that's Gertrude's business"

"That's the worst of it; the waiting-maid is a great lady, who doesn't mind cheating your nieces out of their lovers"

"Well, what can I do, Belle? I'm sure I don't want Gertrude's company any more than you do, but I don't see how I can get rid of her"

"I should think you'd tell Mr. Graham some of the harm she's

self-control to check herself in any course which would be likely to prove obnoxious to his imperious will. Unfortunately, however, the head of the family returned unexpectedly, and under circumstances which forestalled any preparation or warning. He arrived just at dusk, having come from town in an omnibus, which was quite contrary to his usual custom.

It was a cool evening, the windows and doors of the house were closed, and the drawing-room was so brilliantly lighted that he at once suspected that a large company was being entertained. He felt vexed, for it was Saturday night, and, in accordance with old New England customs, Mr Graham loved to see his household quiet on that evening. He was, moreover, suffering from a violent headache, and, avoiding the drawing-room, he passed on to the library, and then to the dining-room. Both were chilly and deserted. He then made his way upstairs, walked through several rooms, glanced indignantly at their disordered and slovenly appearance, and finally gained Emily's chamber He opened the door noiselessly and looked in.

A bright wood-fire burned upon the hearth; a couch was drawn up beside it, on which Emily was sitting, and Gertrude's little rocking-chair occupied the opposite corner. The firelight reflected upon the white curtains, the fragrant perfume which proceeded from a basket of flowers upon the table, the perfect neatness and order of the apartment, the placid, peaceful face of Emily, and the radiant expression of Gertrude's countenance, as she looked up and saw the father and protector of her blind friend looking pleasantly in upon them, proved such a charming contrast to the scenes presented in other parts of the house, that the old gentleman, warmed to more than usual satisfaction with both of the inmates, greeted his surprised daughter with a hearty paternal embrace, and, bestowing upon Gertrude an equally affectionate greeting, exclaimed, as he took the armchair which the latter wheeled in front of the fire for his accommodation, "Now, girls, this looks pleasant and home-like! What in the world is going on downstairs?"

Emily explained that there was company staying in the house.

"Ugh! company!" grunted Mr Graham, in a dissatisfied tone "I should think so! Been emptying rag-bags about the chambers, I should say, from the looks!"

Gertrude asked if he had had tea

He had not, and should be thankful for some. So she went downstairs to see about it

"Don't tell anybody that I've got home, Gerty," called he, as she left the room; "I want to be left in peace *to-night* at least."

While Gertrude was gone, Mr. Graham questioned Emily as to her preparations for the European tour. To his surprise he learned that she had not received his message communicated in the letter to Mrs. Graham, and knew nothing of his plans. Equally astonished and angry, he nevertheless restrained his temper for the present.

After he had enjoyed a comfortable repast, at which Gertrude presided, they both returned to Emily's room, and now Mr. Graham's first enquiry was for the *Evening Transcript.*

"I will go for it," said Gertrude, rising.

"Ring!" said Mr. Graham imperatively. He had observed at the tea-table that Gertrude's ring was disregarded, and wished to know the cause of so strange a piece of neglect Gertrude rang several times, but obtained no answer to the bell. At last she heard Bridget's step in the entry, and, opening the door, said to her, "Bridget, won't you find the *Transcript* and bring it to Miss Emily's room?" Bridget soon returned with the announcement that Miss Isabella was reading it, and declined to give it up

A storm gathered on Mr. Graham's brow "Such a message to *my daughter*!" he exclaimed "Gertrude, go yourself, and tell the impertinent girl that *I* want the paper! What sort of behaviour is this?"

Gertrude entered the drawing-room, and spoke in a low tone to Belle, who immediately yielded up the paper, blushing and looking much confused as she did so. Belle was afraid of Mr. Graham, and, on her informing her aunt of his return, it was that lady's turn also to look disconcerted She had fully calculated upon seeing her husband before he had access to Emily.

But it was too late now. She used all her tact, however, to disperse her friends at an early hour, and then found Mr. Graham smoking in the dining-room.

He was in an unpleasant mood, but she contrived to conciliate rather than irritate him, and was able the next morning to introduce to her friends an apparently affable and obliging host

Mr. Graham had not been at home a week before he understood plainly the existing state of feeling in the mind of his wife and Isabel, and the manner in which it was likely to act upon the happiness of the household He saw that Emily was superior to complaint, he knew that she had never in her life complained; he observed, too, Gertrude's devotion to his much-loved child, and it stamped her in his mind as one who

had a claim to his regard which should never be disputed. It is not, then, to be wondered at that when, with much art, and many plausible words, Mrs. Graham made her intended insinuations against his youthful *protégée*, Mr. Graham treated them with indifference and contempt.

He had known Gertrude from a child. She was high-spirited—he had sometimes thought her wilful—but *never* mean or false. It was no use to tell him all that nonsense;—he was glad, for his part, that it was all off between Kitty and Bruce; for Ben was an idle fellow, and would never make a good husband, and, as to Kitty, he thought her much improved of late, and if it were owing to Gertrude's influence, the more they saw of each other the better.

Mrs Graham was in despair. "It is all settled," said she to Isabel "It is no use to contest the point; as sure as *we* go to Europe, Emily and Gertrude will go *too*."

She was almost startled, therefore, by what she considered an excess of good luck, when informed a few days afterwards that the couple she had so dreaded to have of the party were in reality to be left behind, and that, too, at Miss Graham's special request. Emily's scruples with regard to mentioning to her father the little prospect of pleasure the tour was likely to afford her all vanished when she found that Gertrude, whose interest she ever had at heart, would be likely to prove a still greater sufferer from the society to which she would be subjected.

Calmly, and without hesitation, as without excitement, did she resolve to adopt a course which should at once free Gertrude from her self-sacrificing service. That she encountered much opposition from her father may well be imagined, but he knew too well the impossibility of any pleasure to be derived to herself from a tour in which mental pain was added to outward deprivation, to persist in urging her to accompany the party, and, concluding at last that it was, after all, the only way to reconcile opposing interests, and that Emily's plan was, perhaps, the best that could be adopted under the circumstances, decided to resign himself to the long separation from his daughter, and permit her to be happy in her own way.

CHAPTER XXXIII

TRAVEL AND A MYSTERY

Mrs Warren's pleasant boarding-house was the place chosen by Emily for her own and Gertrude's winter home; and one month from the time of Mr. Graham's return from New York his country-house was closed, and he, with his wife, Isabel, and Kitty, were on their way to Havre, Mrs Ellis gone to enjoy a little rest from care with some cousins at the eastward, and Mrs Prime established as cook in Mrs Warren's household.

Although ample arrangements were made by Mr. Graham, and all-sufficient means provided for the support of both Emily and Gertrude, the latter was anxious to be once more usefully employed, and, therefore, resumed a portion of her school duties at Mr W——'s Much as Emily loved Gertrude's constant presence, she gladly resigned her for a few hours every day, rejoiced in the spirit which prompted her exertions, and rewarded her with her encouragement and praise In the undisturbed enjoyment of each other's society, and in their intercourse with a small but intelligent circle of friends, they passed a season of sweet tranquillity.

It was a blissful and an improving winter which they thus passed together They lived not for themselves alone, the poor blessed them, the sorrowful came to them for sympathy, and the affection which they both inspired in the family circle was boundless Spring came and passed, and still they lingered there, loth to leave a place where they had been so happy, and nothing at last drove them from the city but a sudden failure in Emily's health, and Dr Jeremy's peremptory command that they should at once seek the country air, as the best restorative

Added to her anxiety about Emily, Gertrude began to feel much troubled at Willie Sullivan's long silence no word from him for two or three months Willie could not have forgotten or meant to neglect her But why this strange suspension of their correspondence? She tried, however, not to feel disturbed about it, and gave all her care to Emily, who now began indeed to require it

They went to the seaside for a few weeks, but the clear and bracing atmosphere brought no strength to the blind girl's feeble frame The good doctor came frequently to see his

favourite patient; but finding, on every visit, that she seemed worse instead of better, he at last ordered her back to the city, declaring that Mrs. Jerry's front chamber was as cool and comfortable as the little stived-up apartments of the crowded boarding-house at Nahant, and there he should insist upon both her and Gertrude's taking up their quarters, at least for a week or two; at the end of which time, if Emily had not found her health, he hoped to have leisure to start off with them in search of it

Emily thought she was doing very well where she was; was afraid she should be troublesome to Mrs Jeremy.

"Don't talk about trouble, Emily; you ought to know Mrs Jerry and me better by this time Come up to-morrow, I'll meet you at the cars. Good-bye!" and he took his hat, and was off.

It was full three weeks after the arrival of his visitors, before the popular physician could steal away from his patients to enjoy a few weeks' recreation in travelling.

Emily was decidedly better, so much so as to view with pleasure the prospect of visiting West Point, Catskill, and Saratoga, even on her own account; and when she reflected upon the probable enjoyment the trip would afford Gertrude, she felt herself endowed with new strength for the undertaking Gertrude needed change of scene and diversion of mind almost as much as Emily. The excessive heat of the last few weeks, and her constant attendance in the invalid's room, had paled the roses in her cheeks, while care and anxiety had weighed upon her mind

New York was their first destination, but the heat and dust of the city were almost insufferable, and during the one day which they passed there, Dr Jeremy was the only member of the party who ventured out of the hotel. The doctor seemed quite insensible to the weather, so much was he occupied with visits to some of his Æsculapian brethren, several of whom were college classmates whom he had not seen for years. He passed the whole day in the revival of old acquaintances and associations, and a number of these newly found but warm-hearted friends having presented themselves at the hotel in the evening to be introduced to Mrs Jeremy and her travelling companions, their room was enlivened until a late hour by the happy and cheerful conversation of a group of elderly men, who, as they recalled the past, and dwelt upon the scenes and incidents of their youthful days, seemed to renew their boyish spirits.

Upon hearing that Dr. Jeremy's party was going up the Hudson the next morning, Dr. Gryseworth, of Philadelphia, who had many years before been a student of our good doctor's, expressed his satisfaction in the prospect of meeting them on board the boat, and introducing to Gertrude his two daughters, whom he was about to accompany to Saratoga to meet their grandmother.

Gertrude, who slept soundly until wakened by Miss Graham, started up in astonishment on seeing her dressed and standing by the bedside—a most unusual circumstance, and one which reversed the customary order of things, as Gertrude's morning kiss was wont to be Emily's first intimation of daylight

"Six o'clock, Gerty, and the boat starts at seven. The doctor has already been knocking at our door"

"How soundly I have slept!" exclaimed Gertrude "I wonder if it's a pleasant day?"

"Beautiful!" replied Emily, "but very warm"

Gertrude made haste to repair for lost time, but was not quite dressed when they were summoned to the early breakfast prepared for travellers She had, also, her own and Emily's trunks to lock, and therefore insisted upon the others preceding her to the breakfast hall, where she promised to join them in a few moments

Of those who still lingered at the table when Gerty made her appearance, there was only one whom she particularly observed during the few moments allowed her by Dr Jeremy for the enjoyment of her breakfast

This was a gentleman who sat at some distance from her, idly balancing his teaspoon on the edge of his cup He had concluded his own repast, but seemed quite at his leisure, and previous to Gertrude's entrance had won Mrs Jeremy's animadversions by a slight propensity he had manifested to make a more critical survey of her party than she found wholly agreeable

When Gertrude joined them, and made her morning salutation to the doctor and his wife, gaily apologizing to the former for her tardiness, the fine colour which mantled her countenance, and the deep brilliancy of her large, dark eyes, drew glances of affectionate admiration from the kind old couple, and were, perhaps, the cause of the stranger's attention being at once transferred from the lovely and interesting face of Emily to the more youthful, beaming, and eloquent features of Gertrude

She had hardly taken her seat before she became aware of the notice she was attracting It embarrassed her, and she

was glad when, after a moment or two, the gentleman hastily dropped his teaspoon, rose, and left the room As he passed out, she had an opportunity of observing him, which she had not ventured to do while he sat opposite to her.

He was a man considerably above the middle height, slender, but finely formed, and of a graceful and dignified bearing. His features were rather sharp, but expressive, and even handsome, his eyes, dark, keen, and piercing, had a most penetrating look, while his firmly compressed lips spoke of resolution and strength of will

But the chief peculiarity of his appearance was his hair, which was deeply tinged with grey, and in the vicinity of his temples almost snowy white. This was so strikingly in contrast with the youthful fire of his eye, and the easy lightness of his step, that instead of seeming the effect of age, and giving him a title to veneration, it rather enhanced the contradictory claims of his otherwise apparent youth and vigour.

"What a queer-looking man!" exclaimed Mrs. Jeremy, when he had passed out

"An elegant-looking man, isn't he?" said Gertrude

"Elegant?" rejoined Mrs. Jeremy. "What! with that grey head?"

"I think it's beautiful," said Gertrude, "but I wish he didn't look so melancholy"

"How old should you think he was?" asked Dr. Jeremy.

"About fifty," said Mrs Jeremy. "About thirty," said Gertrude, both in the same breath

"A wide difference," remarked Emily. "Doctor, you must decide the point"

"Impossible! I wouldn't venture to tell that man's age within ten years, at least Wife has got him old enough, certainly; I'm not sure but I should set him as low even as Gertrude's mark Age never turned *his* hair grey—that is certain."

Intimation was now given that passengers for the boat must be on the alert, and all the speculation upon the probable age of the stranger was suddenly suspended

CHAPTER XXXIV

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

There was an unusually large number of passengers in the boat that morning, and when Dr. Jeremy and his party had got on board, and the ladies had piled their rugs in a corner of the saloon, there was not a vacant seat left for them on deck. Dr. Jeremy therefore was obliged to leave his ladies and go off in search of chairs

"Don't let us stay here," whispered Mrs Jeremy to Gertrude and Emily "Let's go back before the doctor comes! There are beautiful great rocking-chairs down in the cabin, without a soul to sit in them I hate to stand with all these people staring at us, and crowing to think they've got such nice places. Don't you, Emily?"

"I think, when we get seated in the shade, we shall find it cooler than it is below," said Emily, in reply to Mrs Jeremy's proposition. "You always prefer the coolest place, I believe"

"So I do, but I noticed there was a good draught of air in the ladies' saloon, and——" Here the good woman's argument was interrupted by the cordial salutation of Dr. Gryseworth, who, previously seated with his back towards them, had turned at the sound of Emily's flute-like voice, which, once heard, invariably left an impression upon the memory He insisted upon giving up his seat to Mrs Jeremy; and, at the same instant, another gentleman rose, and bowing politely, placed his own chair for the accommodation of Emily, and then walked quickly away. It was the stranger whom they had seen at breakfast Gertrude recognized his keen, dark eye, even before she perceived his singular hair, and, as she thanked him, and placed Emily in the offered seat, she felt herself colour under his earnest glance. But Dr Gryseworth immediately claimed her attention for the introduction to his daughters, and all thought of the retreating stranger was banished for the present.

The Misses Gryseworth were intelligent-looking girls; the eldest, lately returned from Europe, where she had been travelling with her father, was considered a very elegant and superior person, and Gertrude was charmed with the lady-like cordiality with which they both made her acquaintance, and still more with the amiable and sympathizing attentions which they paid to Emily.

By the time that Dr. Jeremy returned with the solitary chair which he had been able to obtain, he found Gertrude and Dr. Gryseworth comfortably accommodated, through the skilful agency of the latter, and was thus enabled to sink at once into his seat, and subside into that state of easy unconcern which admirably became his genial temperament.

Long before the boat reached West Point, where the Jeremys were to go on shore, it was plain to be seen that an excellent understanding subsisted between Gertrude and the Misses Gryseworth, and that time only was wanting to ripen their acquaintance into friendship

They had been for about an hour engaged in the enjoyment of each other's society, and in the view of some of the most charming scenery in the world, when Netta Gryseworth touched her sister's arm, and glancing towards another part of the boat, said in an undertone, "Ellen, do invite Mr. Phillips to come back and be introduced to Miss Flint! See how lonesome the poor man looks."

Gertrude followed the direction of Netta's eye, and saw the stranger of the morning at some distance from them, slowly pacing up and down, with a serious and distracted air.

"He has not been near us for an hour," said Netta.

"I hope we have not frightened your friend away," said Gertrude.

"O no, indeed!" replied Ellen. "Although Mr. Phillips is but a recent acquaintance, we have found him so independent, and sometimes so whimsical, that I am never astonished at his proceedings, or mortified at being suddenly forsaken by him. I wish he would condescend to join us again, however; I should like to introduce him to you, Miss Flint"

Mr. Phillips was not again adverted to, though Gertrude observed, just before the boat stopped at West Point, that Dr. Jeremy and Dr. Gryseworth, having left their party, had joined him, and that the trio were engaged in a colloquy which seemed to possess equal interest to them all.

At West Point Gertrude parted from her new freinds, who expressed an earnest hope that they should again meet in Saratoga; and before the bustle of going on shore had subsided, and she had found on the narrow pier a safe place of refuge for Emily and herself, the boat was far up the river, and the Misses Gryseworth quite undistinguishable among the crowd that swarmed the deck

Our travellers passed one night only at West Point. The weather continued extremely hot, and Dr. Jeremy, perceiving that Emily drooped under the oppressive atmosphere, was

desirous to reach the summit of Catskill Mountain before the Sabbath, which was now near at hand.

One solitary moonlight evening, however, sufficed to give Gertrude some idea of the beauties of the place She had no opportunity to observe it in detail; she saw it only as a whole; but, thus presented to her vision in all the dreamy loveliness of a summer's night, it left on her fresh and impressive mind a vague sentiment of wonder and delight at the surpassing sweetness of what seemed rather a glimpse of Paradise than an actual show of earth, so harmonious was the scene, so calm, so still, so peaceful "Emily, darling," said she, as they stood together in a rustic arbour, commanding the most striking prospect both of the river and the shore, "it looks like you, you ought to live here, and be the priestess of such a temple!"

An early hour in the morning found them again steaming up the river Their first day's experience having convinced them of the danger of delay, they lost no time in securing places on deck, for the boat was as crowded as on the previous morning; but the shores of West Point were hardly passed from their view before Gertrude's watchful eye detected in Emily's countenance the well-known signs of weariness and debility. Sacrificing the intense pleasure she was herself deriving from the beautiful scenes through which the boat was at the moment passing, she at once proposed that they should seek the cabin, where Miss Graham might rest in greater stillness and comfort

Emily, however, would not listen to the proposal

"The prospect is all lost upon me now, Emily," said Gertrude. "I see only your tired face Do go and lie down, if it be only to please me"

"Are you talking of going below?" exclaimed Mrs. Jeremy "I, for one, shall be thankful to, it's as comfortable again, and we can see all we want to from the cabin windows."

"Should you really prefer it?" enquired Emily

"Indeed, I should!" said Mrs Jeremy

"Then, if you will promise to stay here, Gertrude," said Emily, "I will go with Mrs Jeremy"

Gertrude assented to the plan, but insisted upon first accompanying them to find a vacant berth for Emily

As Gertrude went up the staircase to the deck with her usual quick and light step, a tall figure moved aside to let her pass It was Mr. Phillips. He bowed, and Gertrude, returning the salutation, passed on to the place she had left, wondering how he came to be again their travelling companion. He could not have been on board previously to her going below with Emily, she was sure

she should have seen him; she should have known him among a thousand He must have taken the boat at Newburg, it stopped there while she was in the cabin.

As these reflections passed through her mind, she resumed her seat, which was placed at the very stern of the boat, and, with her back to most of the company, gazed out upon the river. She had sat thus for about five minutes, her thoughts divided between the scenery and the interesting countenance of the stranger, when a shadow passed before her, and, looking up, prepared to see and address Dr. Jeremy, she betrayed a little confusion at again encountering a pair of eyes whose earnest, magnetic gaze had the power to disconcert and bewilder her. She was turning away somewhat abruptly, when the stranger spoke.

"Good morning, young lady! Our paths still lie in the same direction, I see. Will you honour me by making use of my guide-book?"

As he spoke, he offered her a little book containing a map of the river and the shores on either side Gertrude took it, and thanked him. As she unfolded the map, he stationed himself a few steps distant, and leaned over the railing in an apparently absent state of mind; nor did he speak to her again for some minutes. Then suddenly turning towards her he said, "You like all this very much?"

"Very much," said Gertrude.

"You have never seen anything so beautiful before in your life" He did not seem to question her; he spoke as if he knew.

"It is an old story to you, I suppose?" said Gertrude.

"What makes you think so?" asked he, smiling

Gertrude was disconcerted by his look, and still more by his smile; it changed his whole face, it made him look so handsome, and yet so melancholy. She blushed, and could not reply, he saved her the trouble.

"That is hardly a fair question, is it? You probably think you have as much reason for your opinion as I had for mine You are wrong, however; I never was here before, but I am too old a traveller to carry my enthusiasm in my eyes—as you do," added he, after a moment's pause, during which he looked her full in the face

Then seeming for the first time to perceive the embarrassment which his scrutiny of her features occasioned, he turned away, and a shadow passed over his fine countenance, lending it for a moment an expression of mingled bitterness and pathos, which served at once to disarm Gertrude's confusion, at his self-introduction and subsequent remarks, and render her forgetful of



M 20

GERTPUDE AND MR PHILLIPS

everything but the strange interest with which this singular man inspired her.

Presently, taking a vacant chair next hers, he directed her attention to a beautiful country residence on their right, spoke of its former owner, whom he had met in a foreign land, and related some interesting anecdotes concerning an adventurous journey which they had taken together. This again introduced other topics, chiefly connected with wanderings in countries almost unknown, even in this exploring age, and so rich and varied was the stranger's conversation, so graphic were his descriptions, so exuberant and glowing his imagination, and so powerful his command of words and his gift of expressing and giving force to his thoughts, that his young and enthusiastic listener sat entranced with admiration and delight

He took no advantage, however, of the apparent self-forgetfulness with which Gertrude enjoyed his society, but continued to enlarge upon such subjects as naturally presented themselves, and was careful not to disturb her equanimity by again bestowing upon her the keen and scrutinizing gaze which had proved so disconcerting By the time, therefore, that Dr Jeremy came in search of his young charge, conversation between her and the stranger had assumed so much ease and freedom from restraint, that the doctor opened his eyes in astonishment, shrugged his shoulders, and exclaimed

"This is pretty well, I declare!"

Gertrude did not see the doctor approach, but looked up at the sound of his voice Conscious of the surprise it must be to him to find her talking so familiarly with a complete stranger, she coloured slightly at his abrupt remark, but observing that her companion was quite unconcerned, and even received it with a smile, she felt herself rather amused than embarrassed, for, strangely enough, the latter feeling had almost entirely vanished, and she had come to feel confidence in her fellow-traveller, who rose, shook hands with Dr Jeremy, and said with perfect composure

"Will you have the kindness to present me to this young lady? We have already had some conversation together, but do not yet know by what name we may address each other"

Dr Jeremy having performed the ceremony of introduction, Mr. Phillips bowed gracefully, and looked at Gertrude in such a benignant, fatherly way, that she hesitated not to take his offered hand Shortly afterwards passengers for Catskill were summoned to dinner, when he, as well as Dr Jeremy and Gertrude, went below

The bustle of landing immediately followed. Two stage coaches were waiting at the wharf to take passengers up the mountain, and before Dr. Jeremy had turned his back upon the river, Emily and Gertrude were placed in one of them by Mr Phillips, who, without asking questions, or even speaking at all, took this office upon himself, and then went to inform the doctor of their whereabouts The doctor and his wife soon joined them, a party of strangers occupied the other seats in the coach, and after some delay they commenced the afternoon's drive.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE ROCK OF AGES

For the first few miles Gertrude's whole attention was required to shield Emily and herself from the rays of a burning sun which shone into the coach full upon their faces, and it was a great relief when they at last reached the steep but smooth and beautifully shaded road which led up the side of the mountain.

The atmosphere being perfectly clear, the gradually widening prospect was most beautiful, and Gertrude's delight and rapture were such that the restraint imposed by stage-coach decorum was almost insupportable. When, therefore, the ascent became so laborious that the gentlemen were invited to alight, and relieve the weary horses of a part of their burden, Gertrude gladly accepted Dr Jeremy's proposal that she should accompany him on a walk of a mile or two.

Gertrude was an excellent walker, and she and the still active doctor soon left the coaches far behind them At a sudden turn in the road they stopped to view the scene below, and, lost in silent admiration, stood enjoying the stillness and beauty of the spot, when they were startled by a voice close beside them, saying

"A fine landscape, certainly!"

They looked around, and saw Mr Phillips seated upon a moss-grown rock, against which Gertrude was at the moment leaning One would have thought, to look at him, leaning so idly and even boyishly upon his hand, that he had been sitting there for hours at least, and felt quite at home in the place. He rose to his feet, however, immediately upon being perceived, and joined Dr. Jeremy and Gertrude.

"You have got the start of us, sir," said the former.

"Yes; I have walked from the village."

All three resumed their walk. Mr. Phillips and Dr. Jeremy conversed in an animated manner, and Gertrude, content to be a listener, soon perceived that she was not the only person to whom the stranger had power to render himself agreeable.

Now, Gertrude thought their new acquaintance must be a botanist by profession, so versed was he in everything relating to that department of science. Then, again, she was equally sure that geology must have been with him an absorbing study, so intimate seemed his acquaintance with mother earth; and both of these impressions were in turn dispelled, when he talked of the ocean like a sailor, of the counting-house like a merchant, of Paris like a man of fashion.

In the meantime she walked beside him, silent but not forgotten or unnoticed; for as they approached a rough and steep ascent, he offered his arm, and expressed a fear lest she should become fatigued. She assured him there was no danger of that. Dr. Jeremy declared it his belief that Gerty could outwalk them both; and thus satisfied, Mr. Phillips resumed the broken thread of their discourse, into which before long Gertrude was drawn, almost unawares.

At length the doctor was compelled to give way to a weariness which he could no longer disguise from himself or his companions, much as he disliked to acknowledge the fact; and, seating themselves by the roadside, they awaited the arrival of the coach.

There had been a short silence, when the doctor, looking at Gertrude, remarked:

"There will be no church for us to-morrow, Gerty."

"No church!" exclaimed Gertrude, gazing about her with a look of reverence. "How *can* you say so?"

Mr. Phillips bestowed upon her a smile of interest and enquiry, and said in a peculiar tone:

"There is no Sunday here, Miss Flint; it doesn't come up so high."

He spoke lightly—too lightly, Gertrude thought—and she replied with some seriousness, and much sweetness:

"I have often rejoiced that the Sabbath had been sent *down* into the *lower* earth; the higher we go, the nearer we come, I trust, to the eternal Sabbath."

Mr. Phillips bit his lip, and turned away without replying. There was an expression about his mouth which Gertrude did not exactly like: but she could not find it in her heart to reproach him for the slight sneer which his manner, rather than his look,

implied, for as he gazed a moment or two into vacancy, there was in his wild, absent countenance such a look of sorrow, that she could only pity and wonder. The coaches now came up, and, as he placed her in her former seat, he resumed his wonted serene and kind expression, and she felt convinced that it was only doing justice to his frank and open face to believe that nothing was hid beyond it that would not do honour to the man.

An hour brought them to the Mountain House, and, greatly to their joy, they were at once shown to some of the most excellent rooms the hotel afforded As Gertrude stood at the window of the chamber allotted to herself and Emily, and heard the loud murmurs of some of her fellow-travellers who were denied any tolerable accommodation, she could not but be astonished at Dr Jeremy's unusual good fortune in being treated with such marked partiality.

Emily, being greatly fatigued with the toilsome journey, had supper brought to her own room, and Gertrude partaking of it with her, neither of them sought other society that night, but at an early hour betook themselves to rest

The last thing that Gertrude heard, before falling asleep, was the voice of Dr Jeremy, as he passed the door.

"Take care, Gerty, and be up in time to see the sun rise."

She was not up in time, however, nor was the doctor himself; neither of them had calculated upon the sun's being such an early riser, and though Gertrude, mindful of the caution, sprung up almost before her eyes were open, a flood of daylight was pouring in at the window, and a scene met her gaze which at once put to flight every regret at having overslept herself, since nothing, she thought, could be more solemnly glorious than that which now lay outspread before her.

From the surface of the rocky platform upon which the house was built, far out to the distant horizon, nothing was to be seen but a sea of snowy clouds, which wholly overshadowed the lower earth, and hid it from view Vast, solid, and of the most perfect whiteness, they stretched on every side, forming, as they lay in thick masses, between which not a crevice was discernible, an unbroken curtain, dividing the heavens from the earth.

Gertrude gave one long look, then hastened to dress herself and go out upon the platform The house was perfectly still, no one seemed yet to be stirring, and she stood for some time entranced, almost breathless, with awe and admiration.

At length she heard footsteps, and, looking up, saw Dr and Mrs Jeremy approaching. The doctor rubbed his hands as they joined Gertrude

"Very fine this, Gerty! A touch beyond anything I had calculated upon"

Gertrude turned upon him her beaming eyes, but did not speak

Satisfied, however, with the expression of her face, which was sufficient, without words, to indicate her appreciation of the scene, the doctor stepped to the edge of the flat rock upon which they stood, placed his hands beneath his coat tails, and indulged in a soliloquy, made up of short exclamations, and interjectional phrases, expressive of his approbation, still further confirmed and emphasized by a quick, regular nodding of his head

After they had looked for a little while, Gertrude suggested that they should explore a little path at the right of the house The doctor agreed; but after they had gone some distance, Mrs. Jeremy objected to go farther

Bidding Gertrude go on and wait for him at the top of the hill, he started to take his wife back to the hotel. Gertrude, therefore, went on alone After a few moments spent in active climbing, she reached the highest point of ground, and found herself once more on an elevated, woody platform, from which she could look forth, as before, upon the unbroken sea of clouds

She seated herself at the root of an immense pine-tree, removed her bonnet, for she was warm from recent exercise, and as she inhaled the refreshing mountain breeze, gave herself up to the train of reflection which she had been indulging when disturbed by Dr and Mrs Jeremy.

She had sat thus but a moment when a slight rustling noise startled her, and was springing to her feet; but hearing a low sound, as of someone breathing, turned her eyes in the direction from which it came, and saw, only a few yards from her, the figure of a man stretched upon the ground, apparently asleep She went towards it with a careful step, and, before she could see the face, the large straw hat, and the long, blanched, wavy hair, betrayed the identity of the individual Mr Phillips was, or appeared to be, sleeping, his head was pillowed upon his arm, his eyes were closed, and his attitude denoted perfect repose. Gertrude stood still and looked at him As she did so, his countenance suddenly changed; the peaceful expression gave place to the same unhappy look which had at first excited her sympathy His lips moved, and in his dreams he spoke, or rather shouted, "No! no! no!"—each time that he repeated the word pronouncing it with more vehemence and emphasis;

then wildly throwing one arm above his head, he let it fall gradually and heavily upon the ground, and the excitement subsiding from his face, he uttered the simple words, "*O dear!*" much as a grieved and tired child might do, as he leans his head upon his mother's knee.

Gertrude was deeply touched. She forgot that he was a stranger: she saw only a sufferer. An insect lit upon his fair, open forehead; she leaned over him, brushed away the greedy creature, and as she did so, one of the many tears that filled her eyes fell upon his cheek.

Quietly, then, without motion or warning, he awoke, and looked full in the face of the embarrassed girl, who started, and would have hastened away; but, leaning on his elbow, he caught her hand and detained her. He gazed at her for a moment without speaking, then said in a grave voice:

"My child, did you shed that tear for me?"

She did not reply, except by her eyes, which were still glistening with the dew of sympathy.

"I believe you *did*," said he, "and from my heart I bless you! But never again weep for a stranger; you will have woes enough of your own if you live to be of my age"

"If I had not had sorrows already," said Gertrude, "I should not know how to feel for others; if I had not often wept for myself, I should not weep now for you"

"But you are happy?"

"Yes"

"Some find it easy to forget the past."

"*I* have not forgotten it"

"Children's griefs are trifles, and you are still scarce more than a child."

"I *never* was a child," said Gertrude

"Strange girl!" soliloquized her companion. "Will you sit down and talk with me a few minutes?"

Gertrude hesitated.

"Do not refuse, I am an old man, and very harmless Take a seat here, under this tree, and tell me what you think of the prospect."

Gertrude smiled inwardly at the idea of his being such an old man, and calling her a child; but, old or young, she had it not in her heart to fear him, or refuse his request. She sat down, and he seated himself beside her, but did not speak of the prospect, or of anything, for a moment or two, then, turning to her abruptly, he said, "So you were never unhappy in your life?"

"Never?" exclaimed Gertrude "O yes; often."

"But never long?"

"Yes; I can remember whole years when happiness was a thing I had never dreamed of."

"But comfort came at last What do you think of those to whom it never comes?"

"I know enough of sorrow to pity and wish to help them"

"What can you do for them?"

"*Hope* for them—*pray* for them!" said Gertrude, with a voice full of feeling

"What if they be past hope?—beyond the influence of prayer?"

"There are none such," said Gertrude with decision.

"Do you see," said Mr. Phillips, "this curtain of thick clouds now overshadowing the world? Even so many a heart is weighed down and overshadowed by thick and impenetrable darkness."

"But the light shines brightly above the clouds," said Gertrude

"Above? Well, that may be; but what avails it to those who see it not?"

"It is sometimes a weary and toilsome road that leads to the mountain-top; but the pilgrim is well repaid for the trouble which brings him *above the clouds*," replied Gertrude with enthusiasm

"Few ever find the road that leads so high," responded her melancholy companion, "and those who do cannot live long in so elevated an atmosphere They must come down from their height, and again dwell among the common herd; again mingle in the warfare with the mean, the base, and the cruel, thicker clouds will gather over their heads, and they will be buried in redoubled darkness."

"But they have seen the glory; they know that the light is ever burning on high, and will have faith to believe it will pierce the gloom at last See, see!" said she, her eyes glowing with the fervour with which she spoke. "Even now the heaviest clouds are parting, the sun will soon light up the valley!"

She pointed, as she spoke, to a wide fissure which was gradually disclosing itself, as the hitherto solid mass of clouds separated on either side, and then turned to the stranger to see if he observed the change, but, with the same smile upon his unmoved countenance, he was watching, not the display of nature in the distance, but that close at his side He was gazing with intent interest upon the young and ardent worshipper of the beautiful

and the true, and, in studying her features and observing the play of her countenance, he seemed so wholly absorbed, that Gertrude—believing he was not listening to her words, but had fallen into one of his absent moods—ceased speaking, rather abruptly, and was turning away, when he said:

"Go on, happy child! Teach *me*, if you can, to see the world tinged with the rose colouring it wears for *you*; teach me to love and pity as you do that miserable thing called *man*. I warn you that you have a difficult task, but you seem to be very hopeful."

"Do you hate the world?" asked Gertrude with straightforward simplicity.

"Almost," was Mr. Phillips's answer.

"*I* did *once*," said Gertrude musingly.

"And will again, perhaps."

"No, that would be impossible; it has been a good foster-mother to its orphan child, and now I love it dearly."

"Have they been kind to you?" asked he with eagerness. "Have heartless strangers deserved the love you seem to feel for them?"

"Heartless strangers!" exclaimed Gertrude, the tears rushing to her eyes. "O, sir, I wish you could have known my Uncle True, and Emily, dear, blind Emily! You would think better of the world for their sakes."

"Tell me about them," said he in a low, unsteady voice, and looking fixedly down into a precipice at his feet.

"There is not much to tell, only that one was old and poor, and the other wholly blind; and yet they made everything rich, and bright, and beautiful to me, a poor, desolate, injured child."

"Injured! Then you acknowledge that you had previously met with wrong and injustice?"

"I!" exclaimed Gertrude; "my earliest recollections are only of want, suffering, and much unkindness."

"And these friends took pity on you?"

"Yes. One became an earthly father to me, and the other taught me where to find a heavenly one."

"And ever since then you have been free and light as air, without a wish or care in the world!"

"No, indeed. I did not say so—I do not mean so," said Gertrude. "I have had to part from Uncle True, and to give up other dear friends, some for years and some for ever, I have had many trials, and even am now oppressed by more than one subject of anxiety and dread."

"How, then, so cheerful and happy?" asked Mr. Phillips.

Gertrude had risen, for she saw Dr. Jeremy approaching, and stood with one hand resting upon a solid mass of stone, under whose projecting shadow she had been seated She smiled a thoughtful smile at Mr Phillips' question, and said, in a low, fervent tone, "I see the gulf yawning beneath me, but I lean upon the Rock of Ages"

Gertrude had spoken truly when she said that more than one anxiety and dread oppressed her, for, mingled with a daily increasing fear lest the time was fast approaching when Emily would be taken from her, she had of late been harassed and grieved by the thought that Willie Sullivan, towards whom her heart yearned with more than a sister's love, was fast forgetting the friend of his childhood It was now some months since she had received a letter from India The last one was short, and written in a haste which Willie apologized for on the score of business cares and duties; and Gertrude was compelled unwillingly to admit the chilling presentiment that, now that his mother and grandfather were no more, the ties which bound the exile to his native home were sensibly weakened

Dr Jeremy's approach was the signal for hearty congratulations and greetings between himself and Mr Phillips The doctor began to converse in his animated manner, and spoke with hearty delight of the beauty and peacefulness of that bright Sabbath morning in the mountains, and Mr. Phillips, compelled to exert himself, and conceal, if he could not dispel, the gloom which weighed upon his mind, talked with an ease, and even a playfulness, which astonished Gertrude, who walked back to the house silently wondering at this strange and inconsistent man. She did not see him at breakfast, and at dinner he took a seat at some distance from Dr Jeremy's party, and merely acknowledged their acquaintance by a graceful salutation to Gertrude as she left the dining-hall

Still later in the day he suddenly made his appearance on the broad piazza, where Emily and Gertrude were seated Gertrude hoped Mr. Phillips would join them She knew that Emily would be charmed with his rich and varied conversation, and felt an instinctive hope that the sweet tones of the comfort-carrying voice, which so many loved and blessed, would speak to his heart a lesson of peace But she hoped in vain. He started on seeing them, walked hastily away, and Gertrude soon after espied him toiling up the same steep path which had attracted them both in the morning, nor did he make his appearance at the hotel again that night.

The Jeremys stayed two days longer at the Mountain House. The invigorating air benefited Emily, who appeared stronger than she had done for weeks past, and was able to take many a little stroll in the neighbourhood of the house

They saw no more of their new acquaintance, who, they learned, had left at an early hour on Monday, and took a pedestrian course down the mountain.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE INVISIBLE CHARM

Saratoga is a queer place. One sees congregated there, at the height of the season, delegates from every part of our own and from many foreign countries Fashion's ladder is transplanted thither, and all its rounds are filled Beauty, wealth, pride, and folly are well represented; and so, too, are wit, genius, and learning Idleness reigns supreme, and no one, not even the most active, busy, and industrious citizen of our working land, dares, in this her legitimate province, to dispute her temporary sway. Every rank of society, every profession, and almost every trade, meet each other on an easy and friendly footing The acknowledged belle, the bearer of an aristocratic name, the owner of a well-filled purse, the renowned scholar, artist, or poet, have all a conspicuous sphere to shine in. There are many counterfeits, too The nobodies at home stand a chance to be considered somebodies here; and the *first people* of a distant city, accustomed to consider themselves somebodies, sit in corners and pout at suddenly finding themselves nobodies All come, however, from a common motive, all are in pursuit of amusement, recreation, and rest from labour; and, in this search after pleasure, a friendly and benevolent sentiment for the most part prevails. All are in motion, and the throngs of well-dressed people moving to and fro, on foot, on horseback, and in carriages, together with the gay assemblages crowded upon the piazzas of the hotels, constitute a lively and festive scene; and he who loves to observe human nature may study it here in its most animated form

It was a wholly new experience to Gertrude, and although, in the comparative retirement and privacy of Congress Hall she saw only the reflection of Saratoga gaiety, and heard only

the echo of its distant hum, there was enough of novelty and excitement to entertain, amuse, and surprise one who was a complete novice in the ways of fashionable life. In the circle of high-bred, polished, literary, and talented persons whom Madame Gryseworth drew about her, and into which Dr. Jeremy's party were at once admitted as honoured members, Gertrude found much that was congenial to her cultivated and superior taste, and she herself soon came to be appreciated and admired as she deserved.

Madame Gryseworth was a lady of the old school—one who had all her life been accustomed to the best society, and who continued, in spite of her advanced years, to enjoy and to adorn it. She was still a fine-looking woman, tall and stately; and though a little proud, and to strangers a little reserved, she soon proved herself an agreeable companion to people of all ages.

One evening, when the Jeremys had been a week at Saratoga, as Emily and Gertrude were leaving the tea-table they were joined by Netta Gryseworth, who, linking her arm in Gertrude's, exclaimed, in her usual gay manner, "Gertrude, I shall quarrel with you soon!"

"Indeed!" said Gertrude. "On what ground?"

"Jealousy."

Gertrude blushed slightly.

"O, you needn't turn so red; it is not on account of any grey-headed gentleman staring at you all dinner-time from the other end of the table. No; I'm indifferent on that score. Ellen and you may disagree about Mr. Phillips's attentions, but I'm jealous of those of another person"

"I hope Gertrude isn't interfering with your happiness in any way," said Emily, smiling.

"She is, though," replied Netta. "My happiness, my pride, my comfort—she is undermining them all She would not dare so to conduct herself, Miss Graham, if you could see her behaviour."

"Tell me all about it," said Emily coaxingly, "and I will promise to interest myself for you."

"I doubt that," answered Netta; "I am not sure but you are a coadjutor with her. However, I will state my grievance. Do you not see how entirely she engrosses the attention of an important personage? Are you not aware that Peter has ceased to have eyes for anyone else? For my own part, I can get nothing to eat or drink until Miss Flint is served, and I'm determined to ask papa to change our seats at the table. It

isn't that I care about my food; but I feel insulted—my pride is essentially wounded. A few days ago I was a great favourite with Peter, and all my pet dishes were sure to be placed directly in front of me; but now the tune is changed, and this very evening I saw him pass Gertrude the blackberries, which the creature knows I delight in, while he pushed a dish of blues towards me in a manner which seemed to imply, 'Blueberries are good enough for *you*, Miss!'"

"I have noticed that the waiters are very attentive to us," said Emily. "Do you suppose Gertrude has been secretly bribing them?"

"She says not," replied Netta. "Didn't you tell me so yesterday, Gertrude, when I was drawing a similar comparison between their devotion to you and to our party? Didn't you tell me that neither the doctor nor any of you ever gave Peter anything?"

"Certainly," answered Gertrude, "his attentions are all voluntary; but I attribute them entirely to Emily's influence, and his desire to serve her."

"It's no such thing," said Netta, emphasizing her remark by a mysterious little shake of the head, "it's sorcery, I'm sure of it, you've been practising the black art, Gertrude, and I'll warn Peter this very day."

As she spoke they reached the corner of the drawing-room where the old ladies Gryseworth and Jeremy were sitting upon a sofa, engaged in earnest conversation, while Ellen, who had just returned from a drive with her father, stood talking with him and a Mr Petrancourt, who had that evening arrived from New York

The ladies on the sofa made room for Emily, and Netta and Gertrude seated themselves near by. Occasionally Madame Gryseworth cast glances of annoyance at a group of children on the other side of the room, who by their noisy shouts continually interrupted her remarks, and prevented her understanding those of her neighbour. Gertrude's attention soon became attracted by them also to such a degree that she did not hear more than half of the lively and gay sallies of wit and nonsense which Netta continued to pour forth.

"Do go and play with those children, Gertrude," said Netta, at last; "I know you're longing to go"

"I'm longing to stop their play!" exclaimed Gertrude Some half-dozen gaily and fancifully dressed children had collected around a strange little new-comer, whom they were subjecting to every species of persecution Her clothes, though of rich

materials, were most untidily arranged, and appeared somewhat soiled by travelling. Her little black silk frock seemed to be quite outgrown, being much shorter than some of her other garments, and her whole appearance denoted great negligence on the part of her parents or guardians. When Madame Gryseworth's evident disturbance first led Gertrude to notice the youthful group, this little girl was standing in their midst, looking wildly about her, as if for a chance to escape, but this the children prevented, and continued to ply her with questions, each of which called forth a derisive shout from all but the poor little object of attack, who, on her part, looked ready to burst into tears. Whether the scene reminded Gertrude of some of her own experiences, or merely touched the chord of a universal spirit of sympathy for the injured, she could not keep her eyes from the little party, and, just as Netta was fairly launched upon one of her favourite topics—namely, Mr. Phillips and his unaccountable conduct—she sprung from her seat, exclaiming, "They sha'n't torment that child so!" and hastily crossed the room to the rescue.

Netta burst into a hearty laugh at Gertrude's excited and enthusiastic manner of starting on her benevolent errand; and this, together with the unusual circumstance of her crossing the large and crowded room hastily and alone, drew the enquiries of all the circle whom she had left, and during her absence she unconsciously became the subject of discussion and remark.

"What is the matter, Netta?" asked Madame Gryseworth. "Where has Gertrude gone?"

"To offer herself as a champion, grandmamma, for that little dowdy-looking child."

"Is she the one who has been making all this noise?"

"No, indeed, but I believe she is the cause of it."

"It isn't every girl," remarked Ellen, "who could cross a great room like this so gracefully as Gertrude can."

"She has a remarkably good figure," said Madame Gryseworth, "and knows how to walk—a very rare accomplishment nowadays."

"She is a very well-formed girl," remarked Dr. Gryseworth, who had observed Gertrude attentively as she crossed the room, and now, hearing her commented upon, turned to take his part in the criticism, "but the true secret of her looking so completely the lady lies in her having uncommon dignity of character, being wholly unconscious of observation, and independent of the wish to attract it, and therefore simply acting herself. She dresses well, too. Ellen, I wish you would imitate Miss Flint's style of dress, nothing could be in better taste."

"Or a greater saving to your purse, papa," whispered Netta. "Gertrude dresses very simply."

"Miss Flint's style of dress would not become Miss Gryseworth," said the fashionable Mrs. Petrancourt, who approached in time to hear the doctor's remark. "Your daughter, sir, is a noble, showy-looking girl, and can carry off a great deal of dress."

"So can a milliner's doll, Mrs Petrancourt However, I suppose, in a certain sense, you are right The two girls are not sufficiently alike to resemble each other, if their dresses were matched with Chinese exactness."

"Resemble each other! You surely would not wish to see your beautiful daughter the counterpart of one who has not half her attractions?"

"Are you much acquainted with Miss Flint?"

"Not at all, but Netta pointed her out to me at the tea-table as being a particular friend"

"Then you must excuse me, ma'am, if I remark that it is impossible you should have any idea of her attractions, as they certainly do not lie on the surface."

"You confess, then, that you do not think her handsome, sir?"

"To tell the truth, I never thought anything about it. Ask Petrancourt: he is an acknowledged judge;" and the doctor bowed in a flattering manner to the lady, who had been the belle of the season at the time her husband paid his addresses to her

"I will, when I can get a chance, but he is standing too near the blind lady—Miss Flint's aunt, is she not?"

"Particular friend, not her aunt"

This conversation had been carried on in a low voice, that Emily might not hear it Others, however, were either more careless or more indifferent to her presence, for Madame Gryseworth began to speak of Gertrude without restraint, and she was at this moment saying, "One must see her under peculiar circumstances to be struck with her beauty at once, for instance, as I did yesterday, when she had just returned from riding, and her face was in a glow from exercise and excitement, or as she looks when animated by her intense interest in some glowing and eloquent speaker; or when her feelings are suddenly touched, and the tears start into her eyes, and her whole soul shines out through them"

"Why, grandmamma," cried Netta, "you are really eloquent!"

"So is Gertrude at such times as those I speak of. O, she is a girl after my own heart!"

"She must be a very agreeable young lady from your account," said Mr. Petrancourt. "We must know her."

"You will not find her at all of the same stamp as most of the agreeable young ladies whom you meet in the gay circles. How she has contrived to quiet those children!"

Mr. Petrancourt followed the direction of Madame Gryseworth's eyes "Is that the young lady you were speaking of?" asked he, "the one with great dark eyes, and such a splendid head of hair? I have been noticing her for some time."

"Yes, that is she, talking to the little girl in black."

"Madame Gryseworth," said Dr. Jeremy, through the long open window, stepping inside as he spoke, "I see you appreciate our Gerty; I did not say too much in praise of her good sense, did I?"

"Not half enough, doctor; she is a very bright girl, and a very good one, I believe."

"Good!" exclaimed the doctor; "I didn't know that goodness counted in these places, but, if goodness is worth speaking of, I should like to tell you a little of what I know of that girl," but Miss Graham touched his arm, spoke in a low voice, and interrupted him.

He stopped abruptly. "Emily, my dear," said he, "I beg your pardon, I didn't know you were here, but what you say is very true Gertrude is a private character, and I have no right to bring her before the public. I am an old fool, certainly, but there, we are all friends." And he looked around the circle a little anxiously, cast a slightly suspicious glance at the Petrancourts, and finally rested his gaze upon a figure directly behind Ellen Gryseworth The latter turned, not having been previously aware that any stranger was in the neighbourhood, and, to her surprise, found herself face to face with Mr. Phillips

"Good evening," said she, on recognizing him; but he did not seem to hear her. Madame Gryseworth, who had never seen him before, looked up enquiringly

"Mr. Phillips," said Ellen, "shall I make you acquainted with Mrs. Gryseworth, my——" But before she could complete the introduction, he had darted quickly through the window, and was walking across the piazza with hasty strides He drew forth his handkerchief, wiped the moisture from his brow, and, unseen and unsuspected, brushed away a tear.

CHAPTER XXXVII

A SURPRISE

Later in the evening, when Gertrude, having resigned her little charge to the nurse who came to seek her, had again joined her party, the attention of everyone assembled in the drawing-room was attracted by the entrance of a beautiful and showily dressed young lady, attended by two or three gentlemen. After glancing round the room for the person whom she came to seek, she advanced towards Mrs Petrancourt, who, on her part, rose to receive her young visitor. Unexpected as the meeting was to Gertrude, she at once recognized Isabel Clinton, who, however, passed both her and Emily without observing them, and, there being no vacant chair near at hand, seated herself with Mrs Petrancourt on a couch a little farther up the room, and entered into earnest and familiar conversation, nor did she change her position, or look in the direction of Dr Jeremy's party, until just as she was taking her leave She would have passed them then without noticing their presence, but accidentally hearing Dr. Gryseworth address Miss Flint by name, she half turned, caught Gertrude's eye, spoke a careless "How do you do", with that sort of indifference with which one salutes a very slight acquaintance, cast a look back at Emily, surveyed with an impertinent air of curiosity the rest of the circle to which they belonged, and, without stopping to exchange words or enquiries, walked off.

"O, what a beauty!" exclaimed Netta to Mrs. Petrancourt "Who is she?"

Mrs Petrancourt related what she knew of Miss Clinton, told how she had travelled with her in Switzerland, and met her afterwards in Paris, where she was universally admired; then turning to Gertrude, she remarked, "You are acquainted with her, I see, Miss Flint?"

Gertrude replied that she knew her before she went abroad, but had seen nothing of her since her return

"She has but just arrived," said Mrs Petrancourt, "she came with her father in the last steamer, and has been in Saratoga but a day or two She is making a great sensation at the United States, I hear, and has troops of beaux"

"Most of whom are probably aware," remarked Mr. Petrancourt, "that she will have plenty of money one of these days"

Emily's attention was by this time attracted. She had been conversing with Ellen Gryseworth, but now turned to ask Gertrude if they were speaking of Isabel Clinton

"Yes," said Dr. Jeremy, "and if she were not the rudest girl in the world, my dear, you would not have remained so long in ignorance of her having been here"

Emily forbore to make any comment. It did not surprise her to hear that the Clintons had returned home, as they had separated from the Grahams soon after the latter went abroad, and she had since heard nothing of their movements Gertrude was silent also; but she burned inwardly, as she always did, at any slights being offered to the gentle Emily

Gertrude and Dr. Jeremy were always among the earliest morning visitors at the spring On the morning succeeding the evening of which we have been speaking, they had as usual presented themselves there Gertrude had gratified the doctor by imbibing a tumblerful of a water which she found very unpalatable; and he having quaffed his seventh glass, they had both proceeded some distance on one more walk around the grounds, when he suddenly missed his cane, and believing that he had left it at the spring, went back to look for it

Gertrude would have gone back also, but he insisted upon her continuing her walk in the direction of the circular railway, promising to come round the other way and meet her. She had proceeded some little distance, and was walking thoughtfully along, when, at an abrupt winding in the path, she observed a couple approaching her—a young lady leaning on the arm of a gentleman. A straw hat partly concealed the face of the latter, but in the former she at once recognized Belle Clinton It was equally evident, too, that Belle saw Gertrude, and knew her, but did not mean to acknowledge her acquaintance; for, after the first glance, she kept her eyes obstinately fixed either upon her companion or the ground This conduct did not disturb Gertrude in the least, but, being thus saved the necessity of awaiting and returning any salutation from that quarter, she naturally bestowed her passing glance upon the gentleman who accompanied her He looked up at the same instant, fixed his full, grey eyes upon her, with merely that careless look, however, with which one stranger regards another, then, turning as carelessly away, made some slight remark to his companion.

They pass on. They have gone some steps, but Gertrude stands fixed to the spot She feels a great throbbing at her heart She knows that look, that voice, as well as if she had

seen and heard them yesterday. Could Gertrude forget Willie Sullivan?

But he has forgotten her. Shall she run after him, and stop him, and catch both his hands in hers, and compel him to see, and know, and speak to her? She started one step forward in the direction he had taken, then suddenly paused and hesitated. A crowd of emotions choked, blinded, suffocated her; and while she wrestled with them, he turned the corner and passed out of sight. She covered her face with her hands and leaned against a tree.

It was Willie. There was no doubt of that, but not her Willie—the *boy* Willie. It was true, time had added but little to his height or breadth of figure; for he was a well-grown youth when he went away. But six years of Eastern life had done the work that twice that time would ordinarily have accomplished.

The fresh complexion of the boy had given place to the paler beard-darkened and somewhat sun-browned tints that mark a ripened manhood; the joyous eye had a deeper cast of thought, the elastic step a more firm and measured tread; while the beaming, sunny expression of countenance had given place to a certain grave and composed look.

The winning attractiveness of the boy, however, had but given place to equal, if not superior qualities in the man, who was still eminently handsome, and gifted with that inborn and natural grace and ease of deportment which win universal remark and commendation. The broad, open forehead, the lines of mild but firm decision about the mouth, the frank, fearless manner, were as marked as ever, and were alone sufficient to betray his identity to one upon whose memory these and all his other characteristics were indelibly stamped, and Gertrude needed not the sound of his well-known voice to proclaim at once to her beating heart that Willie Sullivan had met her face to face, had passed on, and that she was left alone, unrecognized, unknown, and to all appearance unthought of and uncared for!

For a time this bitter thought, "He does not know me!" was alone present to her mind. She did not stop to reflect upon the fact that she was but a child when she parted from him, and that the change in her appearance must be immense. Far less did it occur to her to congratulate herself upon a transformation, every shade of which had been to her a proportionate improvement and advantage. The one painful idea, that she was forgotten and lost, as it were, to the dear friend of her childhood, obliterated every other recollection.

Other feelings, too, soon crowded into her mind, in confused and mingled array Why was Willie here, and with Isabel Clinton leaning on his arm? How came he on this side the ocean? and how happened it that he had not immediately sought herself, the earliest, and, as she had supposed, almost the only friend he had left to welcome him back to his native land? Why had he not written and warned her of his coming? How should she account for his strange silence, and the still stranger circumstance of his hurrying at once to the haunts of fashion, without once visiting the city of his birth, and the sister of his adoption?

Poor child! It was so different a meeting from what she had imagined and expected! For the six years that she had been growing into womanhood it had been the dream of her waking hours, and had come as a beautiful though transient reality to her happy sleep He could hardly have presented himself at any hour of the day or night, scarcely in any disguise, that would not have been foreseen and anticipated He could have used no form of greeting that had not already rung in the ears of her fancy, he could bestow upon her no look that would not be familiar. What Willie would say when he first saw her, what he would do to express his delight, the questions he would ask, the exclamations he would utter—all this had been rehearsed by Gertrude again and again, in every new instance taking some new form, or varied by some additional circumstance

But among all her visions there had been none which in the least approached the reality of this painful experience, that had suddenly plunged her into disappointment and sorrow. Her darkest dreams had never pictured a meeting so chilling, her most fearful forebodings had never prefigured anything so heart-rending as this seemingly total annihilation of all the sweet and cherished relations that had subsisted between herself and the long-absent wanderer

No wonder, then, that she forgot the place, the time, everything but her own overwhelming grief, and that, as she stood leaning against the old tree, her chest heaved with sobs, and great tears trickled from her eyes.

She was startled from her position by the sound of an approaching footstep Hastily starting forward, without looking in the direction from which it came, and throwing a lace veil (which, as the day was warm, was the only protection she wore upon her head) in such a manner as to hide her face, she wiped away her fast-flowing tears, and hastened on, to avoid being overtaken and observed by any of the numerous strangers who frequented the grounds at this hour.

Half blinded, however, by the thick folds of the veil, and her sight rendered still dimmer by the tears which continued to fill her eyes, she was scarcely conscious of the unsteady course she was pursuing, when suddenly a loud, whizzing noise, close to her ears, frightened and confused her so that she knew not which way to turn, nor had she time to take a single step; for, at the same instant an arm was suddenly flung around her waist, she was forcibly lifted from her feet with as much ease and lightness as if she had been a little child, and, before she was conscious of what was taking place, found herself detained and supported by the same strong arm, while just in front of her a little hand-car, containing two persons, was whirling by at full speed One step more, and she would have reached the track of the miniature railway, and been exposed to serious, perhaps fatal, injury, from the rapidly moving vehicle. Flinging back her veil, she at once perceived her fortunate escape, and, being at the same moment released from the firm grasp of her rescuer, she turned upon him a half-confused, half-grateful face, whose disturbed expression was much enhanced by her previous excitement and tears

Mr. Phillips—for it was he,—looked upon her in the most tender and pitying manner "Poor child!" said he, soothingly, at the same time drawing her arm through his, "you were very much frightened. Here, sit down upon this bench," and he would have drawn her towards a seat, but she shook her head, and signified by a movement her wish to proceed towards the hotel She could not speak; the kindness of his look and voice only served to increase her trouble, and rob her of the power to articulate.

So he walked on in perfect silence, supporting her, however, with the greatest care, and bestowing upon her many an anxious glance At last, making a great effort to recover her calmness, she partially succeeded—so much so, that he ventured to speak again, and asked, "Did *I* frighten you?"

"You?" replied she, in a low and somewhat unsteady voice. "O no! you are very kind"

"I am sorry you are so disturbed," said he; "those little cars are troublesome things"

"The car!" said Gertrude, in an absent way. "O yes, I forgot."

"You are a little nervous, I fear, can't you get Dr Jeremy to prescribe for you?"

"The doctor! He went back for his cane, I believe"

Mr Phillips saw that she was bewildered. He forbore any attempt at conversation, and they continued their walk to the hotel without another word. Just before leaving her, however, he said, in a tone of deepest interest, as he held her hand for a

moment at parting, "Can I do anything for you? Can I help you?"

Gertrude looked at him. Her eyes thanked him as they again glistened behind a shower of tears. "No, no," gasped she, "but you are very good;" and she hastened into the house, leaving him standing for more than a minute on the spot where she had left him, gazing at the door by which she had disappeared, as if she were still in sight, and he were watching her.

Gertrude's first thought, after gaining the shelter of the hotel, was, how she might best conceal from all her friends any knowledge of the load of grief she was sustaining. That she would receive sympathy and comfort from Emily there could be no doubt, but, in proportion as she loved and respected her benefactress, did she shrink from any disclosure which was calculated to lessen Willie Sullivan in the estimation of one in whose opinion she was anxious that he should sustain the high place to which her own praises had exalted him.

The chief knowledge that Emily had of Willie was derived from Gertrude, with a mingled feeling of tenderness for him and pride on her own account did the latter dread to disclose the fact that he had returned after so many years of absence, that she had met him in the public walks of Saratoga, and that he had passed her carelessly by.

The possibility naturally presented itself to her mind that he had indeed visited Boston, sought her, and, learning where she might be found, had come hither purposely to see her; nor, on calm reflection, did this supposition seem contradicted by his failing, on a mere casual glance, to recognize her, for she could not be ignorant or insensible of the vast change which had taken place both in her face and figure. But the ray of hope which this thought called up was quickly dissipated by the recollection of a letter received the previous evening from Mrs. Ellis, which would certainly have mentioned the arrival of so important a visitor. There was, however, the still further possibility that this arrival might have taken place since the date of Mrs Ellis's concise epistle, and that Willie might have but just reached his destination, and not yet had time to discover her temporary place of abode

It was very hard for her to appear as usual, and elude the vigilance of the affectionate and careful Emily, who, always deeply conscious of her responsibility towards her young charge, and fearful lest, owing to her blindness, she might often be an insufficient protection to one of so ardent and excitable a temperament, was keenly alive to every sensation and emotion experienced by

Gertrude, especially to any fluctuation in her usually cheerful spirits

And Gertrude's spirits, even when she had armed herself with confidence and hope by the encouraging thought that Willie would yet prove faithful to his old friendship, could not but be sorely depressed by the consciousness now forced upon her that he could no longer be to her as he had once been, that they could never meet on the same footing on which they had parted; that he was a man of the world now, with new relations, new cares, new interests, and that she had been deceiving herself, and labouring under a false delusion, in cherishing the belief that in their case the laws of nature would be suspended, and time have no power to alter or modify the nature and extent of their mutual affection There was something in the very circumstance of her first meeting with him in company with Isabel Clinton which tended to impress her with this conviction. Isabel, of all people one so essentially worldly! True, she was the daughter of Willie's early and generous employer, now the senior partner in the mercantile house to which he belonged, and would not only be likely to form his acquaintance, but would have an undoubted claim to every polite attention he might have it in his power to pay her, but still Gertrude could not but feel a greater sense of estrangement, a chilling presentiment of sorrow, from seeing him thus familiarly associated with one who had invariably treated her with scorn and incivility.

There was but one thing for her to do, however; to call up all her self-command, bring pride even to her aid, and endeavour in any event to behave with serenity and composure. The very fear that one keen and searching pair of eyes had already penetrated her secret so far as to discover that she was afflicted in some form or other, served to put her still more upon her guard, and she therefore compelled herself to enter the room where Emily was awaiting her, bid her a cheerful "good morning", and assist, as usual, in the completion of her toilet Her face still bore indications of recent tears—but that Emily could not see—and by breakfast time even they were effectually removed.

Now again new trials awaited her, for Dr. Jeremy, according to his promise, had, after recovering the missing cane, gone to meet her in the direction agreed upon, and finding her false to her appointment, and nowhere to be found among the grounds, was full of enquiries as to the path she had taken, and her reasons for giving him the slip

Before she could plead any reason, Netta Gryseworth came running up, evidently full of pleasantry and fun, and leaning

over Gertrude's shoulder, said in a whisper loud enough to be heard by all the little circle, who were being delayed on their way to breakfast by the doctor's demand for an explanation, "Gertrude, my dear, such affecting partings ought to be private. I wonder you allow them to take place directly at the door-step".

This remark did not lessen Gertrude's discomfiture, which became extreme on Dr. Jeremy's catching Netta by the arm as she was about to run off, and insisting upon knowing her meaning, declaring that he already had suspicions of Gertrude, and wanted to know who she had been walking with.

"O, a certain young beau of hers, who stood gazing after her when she left him, until I began to fear the cruel creature had turned him into stone. What did you do to the poor man, Gertrude?"

"Nothing," replied Gertrude "He saved me from being thrown down by the little rail car, and afterwards walked home with me."

Gertrude answered seriously The doctor, however, did not perceive her growing agitation, and pushed the matter still further.

"Quite romantic! imminent danger! providential rescue! *tête-à-tête* walk home, carefully avoiding the old doctor, who might prove an interruption!—I understand!"

Poor Gertrude, blushing scarlet and pitiably distressed, tried to offer some explanation, and stammered out, with a faltering voice, that she did not notice—she didn't remember.

Ellen Gryseworth gave her a scrutinizing glance, and Netta, half pitying, half enjoying her confusion, dragged her off towards the breakfast-hall, saying, "Never mind, Gertrude, it's no such dreadful thing after all"

The whole morning passed away, and nothing was heard from Willie Conscious, however, of the wrong construction which would be sure to be put upon her conduct if, upon any plea whatever, she on this day absented herself from the dinner-table, she made the effort to dress with as much care as usual; and as she passed up the hall to her seat, it was not strange that, though suffering herself, the rich glow that mantled her cheeks, and the brilliancy which excitement had given to her dark eyes, attracted the notice of others besides Mr. Phillips, who, seated at some distance, continued, during the short time that he remained at the table, to observe her attentively.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE STRICKEN DEER

Evening came at last, and with it an urgent invitation to Gertrude to accompany Dr. Gryseworth, his daughters, and the Petrancourts, to a concert to be given at the United States Hotel. This she declined doing, and persisted in her refusal, in spite of every endeavour to shake her resolution. She felt that it would be impossible for her to undergo another such encounter as that of the morning—she should be sure to betray herself; and now that the whole day had passed, and Willie had made no attempt to see her, she felt that she would not, for the world, put herself in his way, and run the risk of being discovered, and recognized by him in a crowded concert-room. No—she would wait; she should see him soon, at the latest, and under the present circumstances she should not know how to meet him; she would preserve her incognito a little longer.

So they all went without her, and many others from their hotel, and the parlour, being half deserted, was very quiet—a great relief to Gertrude's aching head and troubled mind. Later in the evening, an elderly man, a clergyman, had been introduced to Emily, and was talking with her, Madame Gryseworth and Dr. Jeremy were entertaining each other, Mrs. Jeremy was nodding, and Gertrude, believing that she should not be missed, was gliding out of the room to go and sit awhile by herself in the moonlight, when she met Mr. Phillips in the hall.

"What are you here all alone for?" asked he. "Why didn't you go to the concert?"

"I have a headache"

"I saw you had at dinner Is it no better?"

"No I believe not."

"Come and walk with me on the piazza a little while It will do you good"

She went, and he talked very entertainingly to her, told her a great many amusing anecdotes, succeeded in making her smile, and even laugh, and seemed very much pleased at having done so He related many amusing things he had seen and heard since he had been staying at Saratoga in the character of a spectator, and ended by asking her if she didn't think it was a heartless show

The question took Gertrude by surprise She asked his meaning.

"Don't you think there is something very ridiculous in so many thousand people coming here to enjoy themselves?"

"I don't know," answered Gertrude, "but it has not seemed so to me. I think it's an excellent thing for those who *do* enjoy themselves"

"And how many do?"

"The greater part, I suppose."

"Pshaw! no, they don't More than half go away miserable, and nearly all the rest dissatisfied."

"Do you think so? Now, I thought the charm of the place was seeing so many happy faces, they have nearly all looked happy to me."

"O, that's all on the surface; and, if you'll notice, those who look happy one day are wretched enough the next. Yours was one of the happy faces yesterday, but it isn't to-day, my poor child."

Then, perceiving that his remark caused the hand which rested on his arm to tremble, while the eyes which had been attentively raised to his suddenly fell and hid themselves under their long lashes, he continued. "However, we will trust soon to see it as bright as ever. But they should not have brought you here Catskill Mountain was a fitter place for your lively imagination and reflecting mind; a sensitive nature should not be exposed to all the shafts of malice, envy, and ill-will it is sure to encounter in one of these crowded resorts of selfish, base, and cruel humanity."

"O!" exclaimed Gertrude, at once comprehending that Mr. Phillips suspected her to be smarting under some neglect, feeling of wounded pride, or, perhaps, serious injury, "you speak harshly, all are not selfish—all are not unkind"

"Ah! you are young, and full of faith. Trust whom you can, and as long as you can *I* trust *no one*"

"No one? Are there none, then, in the world, whom you love and confide in?"

"Scarcely; certainly not more than one. Who should I trust?"

"The good, the pure, the truly great"

"And who are they? How shall we distinguish them? I tell you, my young friend, that in my experience—and it has been rich, ay, very rich—the so-called good, the honourable, the upright man, has proved but the varnished hypocrite, the highly finished and polished sinner. Yes," continued he, his voice growing deeper, his manner more excited as he spoke, "I can think of one, a respectable man, one of your *first* men, yes,

and a church member, whose hardness, injustice, and cruelty made my life what it has been—a desert, a blank, or worse than that; and I can think of another, an old, rough, intemperate sailor, over whose head a day never passed that he did not take the name of his God in vain, who had, nevertheless, at the bottom of his heart, a drop of such pure, unsullied essence of virtue as could not be distilled from the souls of ten thousand of your polished rogues. Which, then, shall I trust—the good religious man, or the low, profane, and abject ones?"

"Trust in *goodness*, wherever it be found," answered Gertrude; "but O, trust *all* rather than *none*."

"Your world, your religion, draws a closer line"

"Call it not *my* world, or *my* religion," said Gertrude. "I know of no such line. I know of no religion but that of the heart Christ died for us all alike, and, since few souls are so sunk in sin that they do not retain some spark of virtue and truth, who shall say in how many a light will at last spring up, by aid of which they may find their way to God!"

"You are a good child, and full of hope and charity," said Mr Phillips, pressing her arm closely to his side "I will try and have faith in *you* But, see! our friends have returned from the concert Let us go and meet them"

They had had a delightful time; Alboni had excelled herself, and they were *so* sorry Gertrude did not go "But perhaps," whispered Netta, "you have enjoyed yourself more at home." She half repented of the sly insinuation, even before the words had escaped her; for Gertrude, as she stood leaning unconcernedly upon Mr Phillips's arm, looked so innocent of confusion or embarrassment, that her very manner refuted Netta's suspicions.

"Miss Clinton was there," continued Netta, "and looked beautiful. She had a crowd of gentlemen about her; but didn't you notice" (and she turned to Mrs Petrancourt) "that one seemed to meet with such marked favour that I wonder the rest were not discouraged I mean that tall, handsome young man, who waited upon her into the hall, and went out soon after."

"It was the same one, was it not," asked Ellen, "who afterwards, towards the close of the concert, came in and stood leaning against the wall for some minutes?"

"Yes," answered Netta; "but he only waited for Alboni to finish singing, and then approaching Miss Clinton, leaned over and whispered a word or two in her ear. After that she got up, left her seat, and they both went off."

"Yes, just in the midst of that beautiful piece from *Lucia di Lammermoor*," said Ellen "How could they go away?"

"O, it is not strange under the circumstances," said Mr. Petrancourt, "that Miss Clinton should prefer a walk with Mr. Sullivan to the best music in the world"

"Why?" asked Netta "Is he supposed to be the favoured one?"

"I should think there was no doubt of it," answered Mr. Petrancourt. "He was in Paris with them during the spring, and they all came home in the same steamer. Everybody knows it is the wish of Mr. Clinton's heart, and Miss Isabel makes no secret of her preference."

"O, certainly," interposed Mrs Petrancourt, "it is an under stood thing. I heard it spoken of by two or three persons this evening"

What became of Gertrude all this time? Could she, who for six years had nursed the fond idea that to Willie she was and should still continue to be, all in all—could she stand patiently by and hear him thus disposed of?

She did do it, not consciously, however, for her head swam round, and she would have fallen but for the firm support of Mr. Phillips, who held her arm so tightly that though he felt the rest could not see, how she trembled Fortunately, too, none but he thought of noticing her blanched face.

Standing there with her heart beating like a heavy drum, and almost believing herself in a horrid dream, she listened attentively, heard and comprehended every word She could not, however, have spoken or moved for her life, and in an instant more accident might have betrayed her excited and almost alarming condition But Mr. Phillips acted, spoke, and moved *for* her, and she was spared an exposure from which her delicate and sensitive spirit would have shrunk indeed

"Mr Sullivan!" said he "Ah! a fine fellow, I know him Miss Gertrude, I must tell you an anecdote about that young man," and, moving forward in the direction in which they had been walking when they met the party from the concert, he made as if they were still intending to prolong their promenade—a promenade, however, in which he was the only walker, for Gertrude was literally borne upon his arm, until the rest of the company, who started at the same moment for the parlour, were hid within its shelter, and he and his companion were left the sole occupants of that portion of the piazza

He proceeded with his story till he perceived that all danger of observation was passed, and then hesitated not to stop abruptly,

and, without ceremony or apology, place her in an armchair which stood conveniently near. "Sit here," said he, "while I go and bring you a glass of water." He then wrapped her mantle tightly about her and walked quickly away.

O, how Gertrude thanked him in her heart for thus considerately leaving her and giving her time to recover herself! It was the most judicious thing he could have done, and the kindest. He saw that she would not faint, and knew that, left alone, she would soon rally her powers.

He was gone some minutes, and when he returned she was perfectly calm. "I have kept you out too long," said he; "come, you had better go in now."

She rose; he put her arm once more through his, guided her feeble steps to a window, which opened into her and Emily's room; and then, pausing a moment, said, in a meaning tone, at the same time enforcing his words by the fixed glance of his piercing eye, "You exhort me, Miss Gertrude, to have faith in everybody, but I bid you, all inexperienced as you are, to beware lest you believe too much Where you have good foundation for confidence, abide by it, if you can, firmly and bravely; but trust nothing which you have not fairly tested, and especially rest assured that the idle gossip of a place like this is utterly unworthy of credit Good night"

What an utter revulsion of feeling these words occasioned Gertrude! They came to her with all the force of a prophecy, and struck deep into her heart Was there not wisdom in the stranger's counsel? Had not she, blindly yielding to her gloomy presentiments and fears, been willing to lend a too ready ear to the whisperings of her own jealous imagination, and a too credulous one to the idle reports of others, while in reality she had proved a traitor to a more noble trust? Who, during the many years she had known him, could have proved himself more worthy of confidence than Willie? Had he not, from his boyhood, been exemplary in every virtue, superior to every meanness and every form of vice? Had he not, in his early youth, forsaken all that he held most dear, to toil and labour beneath an Indian sun, that he might provide comforts and luxuries for those whose support he eagerly took upon himself? Above all, had he not been imbued from his infancy with the highest and purest of Christian principles?

He had, indeed, been all this; and while Gertrude called it to mind, and dwelt upon each phase of his consistent course, she could not fail to remember, too, that Willie, whether as a generous, kind-hearted boy, the adventurous, energetic youth, the successful,

respected, yet sorrow-tried man, had ever manifested towards herself the same deep, ardent, enthusiastic attachment. The love which he had shown for her in her childhood, and during that period when, though still a child, she laboured under the full-grown care and sorrow entailed upon her by Uncle True's sickness and death, had seemed to grow and deepen in every successive day, month, and year of their separation.

During their long and regular correspondence no letter had come from Willie that did not breathe the same spirit of devoted affection for Gertrude. All his thoughts of home and future happy days were inseparably associated with her; and although Mrs. Sullivan, with that instinctive reserve which was one of her characteristics, never broached the subject to Gertrude, her whole treatment of the latter sufficiently evinced that, to her mind, the event of her future union with her son was a thing certain. The bold declaration on Willie's part, conveyed in the letter received by Gertrude soon after his mother's death, that his hopes, his prayers, his labours were now all for her, was not a more convincing proof of the tender light in which he regarded her than all their previous intercourse had been.

Should Gertrude, then, distrust him? Should she at once set aside all past evidences of his worth, and give ready credence to his prompt desertion of his early friend? No! she resolved immediately to banish the unworthy thought; to cherish still the firm belief that some explanation would shortly offer itself which would yet satisfy her aching heart. Until then, she would trust him; bravely and firmly, too, would she trust, for her confidence was not without foundation.

As she made this heroic resolve she lifted up her drooping head and gazed out into the night. The moon had gone down, and the sky was studded with stars, bright, clear, and beautiful. And as, in times long past, these heavenly lights had spoken of comfort to her soul, she seemed now to hear ringing in her ears the familiar saying of the dear old True, "Cheer up, birdie, for I'm of the 'pinion 'twill all come out right at last".

Gertrude continued through the short remainder of the evening in an elevated frame of mind; and, thus sustained, she was able to go back to the drawing-room for Emily, and say good night to her friends with a cheerful voice.

The next morning, however, found her once more yielding to depressed spirits, and the effort which she made to rise, dress, and go to breakfast, was almost mechanical. Her first wish was to leave Saratoga; she longed to go home, to be in a quiet place, where so many eyes would not be upon her.

and when the doctor came in with the letters which had arrived by the early mail, she looked at them so eagerly that he observed it, and said, smilingly, "None for you, Gerty; but one for Emily, which is the next best thing, I suppose"

To Gertrude this was the *very* best thing, for it was a long-expected letter from Mr Graham. To their astonishment he had already arrived in New York, and desired them to join him there on the following day Gertrude could hardly conceal her satisfaction, which was, however, if noticed by her friends, merely attributed to the pleasure she probably felt at the return of Mr and Mrs Graham, and Emily, really delighted at the prospect of so soon meeting her father, was eager to commence preparations for leaving.

They therefore retired to their own room, and Gertrude's time until dinner was fully occupied in the business of packing.

After dinner Mr. Phillips kindly proposed to drive to the lake. Dr. Gryseworth and one of his daughters had, he assured Gertrude, agreed to take seats in a carriage which he had provided, and he hoped she would not refuse to occupy the fourth. As it was an hour when Emily would not require her presence, and she would thus be sure to avoid Willie, she gladly consented to the arrangement

They had been at the lake nearly an hour. Dr. Gryseworth and his daughter Ellen had been persuaded by a party whom they met there to engage in bowling Mr. Phillips and Gertrude had declined taking part, but stood for some time looking on The day, however, being warm, and the air in the building being uncomfortably close, they had gone outside and seated themselves on a bench at a little distance, to wait until the game was concluded As they sat thus, a couple approached and took up a position near them. Mr. Phillips was quite screened from their observation by the trunk of a tree, and Gertrude sufficiently so to be unnoticed, though the sudden paleness which overspread her face as they drew near was so marked as clearly to indicate that she saw and recognized William Sullivan and Isabel Clinton. The words which they spoke also fell distinctly upon her ear.

"Shall I, then, be so much missed?" asked Isabel, looking earnestly in the face of her companion

"Missed!" replied he, turning towards her, and speaking in a slightly reproachful voice; "how can it be otherwise? Who can supply your place?"

"But it will be only two days."

"A short time, under ordinary circumstances," said Willie,

"but an eternity——" He here checked himself, and made a sudden motion to proceed on their walk

Isabel followed him, saying, "But you will wait here until my return?"

He again turned to reply; and this time the reproachful look which overspread his features was visible to Gertrude, as he said, with great earnestness, "Certainly Can you doubt it?"

The strange, fixed, unnatural expression which took possession of Gertrude's countenance as she listened to this conversation, to her so deeply fraught with meaning, was fearful to witness.

"Gertrude!" exclaimed Mr. Phillips, after watching her for a moment, "Gertrude, for Heaven's sake, do not look so! Speak, Gertrude! What is the matter?"

But she did not turn her eyes, did not move a feature of that stony face; she evidently did not hear him He took her hand: it was cold as marble. His face now wore an appearance of distress almost equal to her own, great tears rushed to his eyes, and rolled down his cheeks Once he stretched forth his arms, as if he would gladly clasp her to his bosom and soothe her like a little child, but with evident effort he repressed the emotion. "Gertrude," said he at length, leaning forward and fixing his eyes full upon hers, "what have these people done to you? Why do you care for them? If that young man has injured you—the rascal!—he shall answer for it;" and he sprang to his feet

The words and the action brought Gertrude to herself. "No! no!" said she, "he is not that. I am better now Do not speak of it; don't tell," and she looked anxiously in the direction of the bowling-alley. "I am a great deal better," and, to his astonishment, she rose with perfect composure and proposed going home.

He accompanied her silently, and before they were half-way up the hill where they had left the carriage, they were overtaken by the rest of their party, and in a few moments were driving towards Saratoga.

During the whole drive, and the evening which followed, Gertrude preserved this same rigid, unnatural composure. Once or twice, before they reached the hotel, Dr. Gryseworth asked her if she felt ill, and Mr. Phillips turned many an anxious glance towards her. The very tones of her voice were constrained—so much so, that Emily, on her reaching the house, enquired at once, "What is the matter, my dear child?"

But she declared herself quite well, and went through all

the duties and proprieties of the evening, bidding farewell to many of her friends, and when she parted from the Gryseworths, arranging to see them again in the morning.

To the careless eye Emily was the more troubled of the two, for Emily could not be deceived, and reflected back, in her whole demeanour, the better-concealed sufferings of Gertrude Gertrude neither knew at the time, nor could afterwards recall, one-half of the occurrences of that evening.

Not until the still hours of the night, when Emily appeared to be soundly sleeping by her side, did she venture for an instant to loosen the iron bands of restraint which she had imposed upon herself; but then, the barrier removed, the pent-up torrent of her grief burst forth without check or hindrance She rose from her bed, and, burying her face in the cushions of a couch, gave herself up to blessed tears, every drop of which was a relief to her aching soul. All other sorrows had found her in a great degree fortified and prepared, armed with religious trust, and encouraged by a holy hope; but beneath this sudden and unlooked-for blow she bent, staggered, and shrunk.

That Willie was faithless to his first love she could not now feel a shadow of doubt, and with this conviction she realized that the prop and stay of her life had fallen To whom should she look as the staff of her young and inexperienced life? To whom could she with confidence turn for counsel, protection, support, and love? To whom but Willie! And Willie had given his heart to another—and Gertrude would soon be left alone

No wonder, then, that she wept as the broken-hearted weep; wept until the fountain of her tears was dry, and she felt herself sick, faint, and exhausted. And now she rose, approached the window, flung back from her forehead the heavy folds of her long hair, leaned out, and from the breath of the cool night breeze drank in a refreshing influence Her soul grew calmer as, with her eyes fixed upon the bright lights which shone so sweetly and calmly down, she seemed to commune with holy things Once more they seemed to compassionate her, and, as in the days of her lonely childhood, to whisper, "Gerty!—Gerty!—poor little Gerty!"

Softened and touched by their pitying glance, she gradually sank upon her knees, her uplifted face, her clasped hands, the sweet expression of resignation now gradually creeping over her countenance, all gave evidence that, as on the occasion of her first silent prayer to the then unknown God, her now enlightened soul was holding deep communion with its Maker,

and once more her spirit was uttering the simple words, "Here am I, Lord!"

And now a gentle hand is laid upon her head She turns and sees Emily, whom she had believed to be asleep, but from whom anxiety had effectually banished slumber, and who, with fears redoubled by the sobs which Gertrude could not wholly repress, is standing by her side

"Gertrude," said she in a grieved tone, "are you in trouble, and did you seek to hide it from me? Do not turn from me, Gertrude;" and throwing her arms round her, she drew her head close to her bosom and whispered, "tell me all, my darling! What is the matter with my poor child?"

And Gertrude unburdened her heart to Emily, disclosing to her attentive ear the confession of the only secret she had ever kept from her; and Emily wept as she listened, and when Gertrude had finished, she pressed her again and again to her heart, exclaiming, as she did so, with an excitement of tone and manner which Gertrude had never before witnessed in the usually calm and placid blind girl, "Strange, strange, that you, too, should be thus doomed! O, Gertrude, my darling! we may well weep together; but still, believe me, your sorrow is far less bitter than mine!"

And then, in the darkness of that midnight hour, was Gertrude's confidence rewarded by the revelation of that tale of grief and woe which, twenty years before, had blighted Emily's youth, and which, notwithstanding the flight of time, was still vivid to her recollection, casting over her life a dark shadow of which her blindness was but a single feature

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CHAPTER XXXIX

A TALE OF SORROW

"I was younger than you, Gertrude," said she, "when my trial came, and hardly the same person in any respect that I have been since you first knew me You are aware, perhaps, that my mother died when I was too young to retain any recollection of her; but my father soon married again, and in this step-parent, whom I remember with as much tenderness as if she had been my own mother, I found a love and care which fully compensated for my loss I can recall her now, as she looked towards the latter part of her life—a tall, delicate,

feeble woman, with a very sweet but rather sad face. She was a widow when my father married her, and had one son, who became at once my sole companion—the partner of all my youthful pleasures How dear he became to me, no words can express. The office which each filled, the influence which each of us exerted upon the other, was such as to create mutual dependence; for though his was the leading spirit, and I was ever submissive to a rule which, to my easily influenced nature, was never irksome, there was one respect in which my bold young protector and ruler ever looked to me for aid and support It was to act as mediator between him and my father, for while the boy was almost an idol to his mother, he was ever treated with coldness and distrust by my father, who never understood or appreciated his many noble qualities, but seemed always to regard him with an eye of suspicion and dislike. To my supplicating looks and entreating words, however, he ever lent a willing ear, and all my eloquence was sure to be at the service of my companion when he had a favour to obtain or an excuse to plead

"That my father's sternness towards her son was a great cause of unhappiness to our mother, I can have no doubt, for I well remember the anxiety with which she strove to conceal his faults and misdemeanours, and the frequent occasions on which she herself instructed me how to propitiate the parent, who, for my sake, would often forgive the boy, whose bold, adventurous, independent disposition was continually bringing him into collision with one of whose severity, when displeased, you have yourself had some opportunity to judge.

"As long as our mother was spared to us we lived in comparative harmony, but at last, when I was just sixteen years old, she was stricken with sudden illness, and died Well do I remember, the last night of her life, her calling me to the bedside, and saying, in a solemn voice, 'Emily, my dying prayer is that you will be a guardian angel to my boy!' God forgive me," ejaculated the now tearful blind girl, "if I have been faithless to the trust!

"He of whom I am telling you" (for Emily carefully forbore to mention his name) "was then about eighteen. He had lately become a clerk in my father's employ, much against his will, for he earnestly desired a collegiate education, but my father was determined, and, at his mother's and my persuasion, he was induced to submit. My stepmother's death knit the tie between her son and myself more closely than ever. He still continued an inmate of our house, and we passed all the

time that he could be spared from the office in the enjoyment of each other's society; for my father was much from home, and when there, usually shut himself up in his library, leaving us to entertain each other. I was then a school-girl, fond of books, and an excellent student. We were not invariably happy, however. Often did my father's face wear that stern expression which I most dreaded to see, while the excited, disturbed, and occasionally angry countenance of his stepson denoted plainly that some storm had occurred, probably at the counting-house, of which I had no knowledge, except from its after effects My office of mediator, too, was suspended, from the fact that the difficulties which arose were usually concerning some real or supposed neglect or mismanagement of business matters on the part of the young and inexperienced clerk.

"Matters went on thus for about six months, when it suddenly became evident that my father had either been powerfully influenced by insinuations from some foreign quarter, or had himself suddenly conceived a new and alarming idea He is, as you are aware, a plain man, honest and straightforward in his purposes, whatever they may be, and, even if it occurred to him to manœuvre, incapable of carrying out successfully, or with tact, any species of artifice Our eyes could not, therefore, long be closed to the fact that he was resolved to put an immediate check upon the freedom of intercourse which had hitherto subsisted between the two youthful inmates of his house, to forward which purpose he immediately introduced into the family, in the position of housekeeper, Mrs Ellis, who has continued with us ever since. The almost constant presence of this stranger, together with the sudden interference of my father with such of our long-established customs as favoured his stepson's familiar intimacy with me, sufficiently proved his intention to uproot and destroy, if possible, the closeness of our friendship Nor was it surprising, considering the circumstance that I had already reached the period of womanhood, and the attachment between us could no longer be considered a childish one, while any other might be expected to draw forth my father's disapproval, since his wife's idolized son was as far as ever from being a favourite with him

"My distress at these proceedings was only equalled by the indignation of my companion in suffering, whom no previous conduct on my father's part had ever angered as this did. Nor did the scheme succeed in separating him from me; for, while he on every possible occasion avoided the presence of the spy (as he termed Mrs Ellis), his inventive genius continually con-

trived opportunities of seeing and conversing with me in her absence—a course of behaviour calculated to give still greater colouring to my father's suspicions

"I am convinced that he was mainly actuated to this course by a deep sense of unkindness and injustice, and a desire to manifest his independence of what he considered unwarrantable tyranny. Nor have I reason to believe that the idea of romance, or even future marriage with myself, entered at all into his calculations; and I, who at that time knew, or at least was influenced by no higher law than his will, lent myself unhesitatingly to a species of petty deception to elude the vigilance which would have kept us apart My father, however, as is frequently the case with people of his unsocial temperament and apparent obtuseness of observation, saw more of our manœuvring than we were aware of. He watched us carefully, and, contrary to his usual course of proceeding, forbore for a time any interference I have since been led to think that he designed to wean us from each other in a less unnatural manner than that which he had at first attempted, by availing himself of the earliest opportunity to transfer his stepson to a situation connected with his own mercantile establishment, either in a foreign country, or a distant part of our own.

"Before such a course could be carried out, however, circumstances occurred, and suspicions became aroused, which destroyed one of their victims, and plunged the other——"

Here Emily's voice failed her. She laid her head upon Gertrude's shoulder and sobbed bitterly.

"Do not try to tell me the rest, dear Emily," said Gertrude. "It is enough for me to know that you are so unhappy Do not make yourself wretched by dwelling upon sorrows that are past"

"Past!" replied Emily, recovering her voice and wiping away her tears, "no, they are never past; it is only because I am so little wont to speak of them that they overcome me now Nor am I unhappy, Gertrude It is but rarely that my peace is shaken; nor would I now allow my weak nerves to be unstrung by imparting to another the secrets of that never-to-be-forgotten time of trial, were it not that, since you know so well how harmoniously and sweetly my life is passing on to its great and eternal awakening, I desire to prove to my darling child the power of that heavenly faith which has turned my darkness into marvellous light, and made affections such as mine the blessed harbingers of final joy I have not much more to tell, and that shall be in as few words as possible"

She then went on, in a low voice.

"I was suddenly taken ill with a fever. Mrs. Ellis, whom I had always treated with coldness, and often with disdain (for you must remember I was a spoiled child), nursed me by night and day with a care and devotion which I had no right to expect at her hands, and, under her watchful attendance, and the skilful treatment of our good Dr Jeremy, I began, after some weeks, to recover. One day, when I was sufficiently well to be up and dressed for several hours at a time, I went for change of air and scene into my father's library, the room next to my own, and there quite alone lay half reclining upon the sofa Mrs Ellis had gone to attend to household duties, but before she left me she brought from the adjoining table and placed within my reach a small table, upon which were arranged various phials, glasses, &c., and among them everything which I could possibly require before her return. It was towards the latter part of an afternoon in June, and I lay watching the approach of sunset from an opposite window. I was oppressed with a sad sense of loneliness, for during the past six weeks I had enjoyed no society but that of my nurse, together with periodical visits from my father, and felt, therefore, no common satisfaction and pleasure when my most congenial but now nearly forbidden associate unexpectedly entered the room. He had not seen me since my illness, and after this unusually protracted and painful separation our meeting was proportionately tender and affectionate. He had, with all the fire of a hot and ungoverned temper, a woman's depth of feeling, warmth of heart, and sympathizing sweetness of manner Well do I remember the expression of his noble face, the manly tones of his voice, as, seated beside me on the wide couch, he bathed the temples of my aching head with eau de Cologne, which he took from the table near by, at the same time expressing again and again his joy at once more seeing me.

"How long we had sat thus I cannot tell, but the twilight was deepening in the room, when we were suddenly interrupted by my father, who entered abruptly, came towards us with hasty steps, but stopping short when within a yard or two, folded his arms, and confronted his stepson with such a look of angry contempt as I had never before seen upon his face The latter rose and stood before him with a glance of proud defiance, and then ensued a scene which I have neither the wish nor the power to describe

"It is sufficient to say that, in the double accusation which my excited parent now brought against the object of his wrath, he urged the fact of his seeking (as he expressed it) by mean, base, and contemptible artifice, to win the affections, and with them the

expected fortune, of his only child, as a secondary and pardonable crime compared with his deeper, darker, and but just detected guilt of forgery—forgery of a large amount, and upon his benefactor's name

"To this day, so far as I know," said Emily, with feeling, "that charge remains uncontradicted; but I did not then, I do not now, and I never *can* believe it Whatever were his faults—and his impetuous temper betrayed him into many—of this dark crime, though I have not even his own word in attestation, I dare pronounce him innocent.

"You cannot wonder, Gertrude, that in my feeble and invalid condition I was hardly capable of realizing at the time, far less of retaining, any distinct recollection of the circumstances that followed my father's words. A few dim pictures, however, the last my poor eyes ever beheld, are still engraved upon my memory, and visible to my imagination My father stood with his back to the light, and from the first moment of his entering the room I never saw his face again, but the countenance of the other, the object of his accusation, illumined as it was by the last rays of the golden sunset, stands ever on the foreground of my recollection. His head was thrown proudly back; conscious but injured innocence proclaimed itself in his clear, calm eye, which shrunk not from the closest scrutiny; his hand was clenched, as if he were vainly striving to repress the passion which proclaimed itself in the compressed lips, the set teeth, the deep and angry indignation which overspread his face. He did not speak, apparently he could not command voice to do so; but my father continued to upbraid him in language, no doubt, cutting and severe, though I remember not a word of it It was fearful to watch the working of the young man's face, while he stood there listening to taunts, and enduring reproaches which were no doubt believed by him who uttered them to be just and merited, but which wrought the youth to a degree of frenzy which it was terrible indeed to witness Suddenly he took one step forward, slowly lifting the clenched hand which had hitherto hung at his side. I know not whether he might then have intended to call Heaven to witness his innocence of the crime with which he was charged, or whether he might have designed to strike my father, for I sprang from my seat, prepared to rush between them, and implore them, for my sake, to desist; but my strength failed me, and, with a shriek, I sank back in a fainting fit

"O the horror of my awakening! How shall I find words to tell it?—and yet I must! Listen, Gertrude He—the poor, ruined boy—sprung to help me, and, maddened by injustice, he knew

not what he did. Heaven is my witness, I never blamed him; and if, in my agony, I uttered words that seemed like a reproach, it was because I was too frantic, and knew not what I said."

"What!" cried Gertrude, "he did not——"

"No, no! he did not—he *did not* put out my eyes!" exclaimed Emily, "it was an accident. He reached forward for the eau de Cologne, which he had just had in his hand. There were several bottles, and, in his haste, he seized one containing a powerful acid which Mrs. Ellis had found occasion to use in my sickroom. It had a heavy glass stopper, and he—his hand was unsteady, and he spilt it all——"

"On your eyes?" shrieked Gertrude.

Emily bowed her head.

"O, poor Emily!" cried Gertrude, "and wretched, wretched young man!"

"Wretched, indeed!" ejaculated Emily. "Bestow all your pity on him, Gertrude, for his was the harder fate of the two."

"O, Emily, how intense must have been the pain you endured! How could you suffer so, and live?"

"Do you mean the pain from my eyes? That were severe, indeed, but the mental agony was worse."

"What became of him?" said Gertrude. "What did Mr. Graham do?"

"I cannot give you any exact account of what followed. I was in no state to know anything of my father's treatment of his stepson. You can imagine it, however. He banished him from his sight and knowledge for ever; and it is easy to believe it was with no added gentleness, since he had now, besides the other crimes imputed to him, been the unhappy cause of his daughter's blindness."

"And did you never hear from him again?"

"Yes. Through the good doctor, who alone knew all the circumstances, I learned—after a long interval of suspense—that he had sailed for South America, and, in the hope of once more communicating with the poor exile, and assuring him of my continued love, I rallied from the wretched state of sickness, fever, and blindness into which I had fallen: the doctor had even some expectation of restoring sight to my eyes, which were in a much more hopeful condition. Several months passed away, and my kind friend, who was most diligent and persevering in his enquiries, having at length learned the actual residence and address of the ill-fated youth, I was commencing, through the aid of Mrs. Ellis (whom pity had now wholly won to my service), a letter of love, and an entreaty for his return, when a fatal seal was put to

all my earthly hopes. He died in a foreign land, alone, unnursed, untended, and uncared for. He died of that inhospitable southern disease which takes the stranger for its victim, and I, on hearing the news of it, sunk back into a more pitiable malady; and—and alas, for the encouragement the good doctor had held out of my gradual restoration to sight!—I wept all his hopes away!"

Emily paused. Gertrude put her arms round her, and they clung closely to each other: grief and sorrow made the union between them dearer than ever.

"I was then, Gertrude," continued Emily, "a child of the world, eager for worldly pleasures, and ignorant of any other. For a time, therefore, I dwelt in utter darkness—the darkness of despair I began, too, again to feel my bodily strength restored, and to look forward to a useless and miserable life. You can form no idea of the utter wretchedness in which my days were passed.

"But at last there came a dawn to my seemingly everlasting night It came in the shape of a minister of Christ, our own dear Mr. Arnold, who opened the eyes of my understanding, lit the lamp of religion in my now softened soul, taught me the way to peace, and led my feeble steps into that blessed rest which, even on earth, remaineth to the people of God.

"In the eyes of the world I am still the unfortunate blind girl, one who, by her sad fate, is cut off from every enjoyment; but so great is the awakening I have experienced, that to me it is far otherwise, and I am ready to exclaim, like him who in old time experienced his Saviour's healing power, 'Once I was blind, but now I see!'"

Gertrude half forgot her own troubles while listening to Emily's sad story, and when the latter laid her hand upon her head, and prayed that she too might be fitted for a patient endurance of trial, and be made stronger and better thereby, she felt her heart penetrated with that deep love and trust which seldom come to us except in the hour of sorrow, and prove that it is through suffering only we are made perfect

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CHAPTER XL

THE HOUR OF PERIL

"Good-bye, Gerty," said the doctor, as he bade Emily and her farewell on the deck of one of the Hudson river-boats "I'm afraid you've lost your heart in Saratoga; you don't look quite so

bright as you did when we first arrived there It can't have strayed far, however, I think, in such a place as that, so be sure and find it before I see you in Boston"

He had hardly gone, and it wanted a few minutes only of the time for the boat to start, when a gay group of fashionables made their appearance, talking and laughing too loud, as it seemed to Gertrude, to be well-bred; and conspicuous among them was Miss Clinton, whose companions were evidently making her the subject of a great deal of pleasantry, by which, although she feigned to be half offended, her smiling, blushing face gave evidence that she felt flattered and pleased. At length the significant gestures of some of the party gave intimation of the approach of someone who must not overhear their remarks, and presently William Sullivan, with a travelling-bag in his hand, a heavy shawl thrown over one arm, and his countenance grave, as if he had not quite recovered from the chagrin of the previous evening, appeared in sight, passed Gertrude, whose veil was drawn over her face, and joined Isabel, placing his burden on a chair which stood near.

He had hardly commenced speaking to Miss Clinton, however, before the violent ringing of the bell gave notice to all but the passengers to quit the boat, and he was compelled to make a hasty movement to depart As he did so, he drew a step nearer Gertrude, a step farther from her whom he was addressing, and the former plainly distinguished the closing words of his remark—"Then, if you will do your best to return on Thursday, I will try and not be impatient in the meantime"

A moment more, and the boat was on its way; not, however, until a tall figure, who reached the landing just as she started, had, to the horror of the spectators, daringly leaped the gap that already divided her from the shore, after which, he sought the gentlemen's saloon, threw himself upon a couch, drew a book from his pocket, and commenced reading.

As soon as the boat was fairly under way, and quiet prevailed in their neighbourhood, Emily spoke softly to Gertrude and said—

"Didn't I just now hear Isabel Clinton's voice?"

"She is here," replied Gertrude, "on the opposite side of the deck, but sitting with her back towards us"

"Didn't she see us?"

"I believe she did," answered Gertrude "She stood looking this way while her party were arranging their seats"

"And then chose one which commanded a *different* view?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps she is going to New York, to meet Mrs Graham?"

"Very possible," replied Gertrude. "I didn't think of it before."

There was then quite a pause. Emily appeared to be engaged in thought. Presently she asked in the softest of whispers, "Who was the gentleman who came and spoke to her just before the boat started?"

"Willie," was the tremulous response.

Emily pressed Gertrude's hand and was silent She, too, had overheard his farewell remark, and felt its significance

Several hours passed away, and they had proceeded some distance down the river; for the motion of the boat was rapid—too rapid, as it seemed to Gertrude, for safety. At first occupied by her own thoughts, and unable to enjoy the beautiful scenery which a few weeks previously had caused her such keen delight, she had sat inattentive to all around, gazing down into the deep blue water and communing with her own heart. Gradually, however, she was led to observe several circumstances which excited so much curiosity, and finally so much alarm, that, effectually aroused from the train of reflections she had been indulging, she had leisure only to take into view her own and Emily's present situation, and its probable consequences

Several times since they left Albany had the boat in which they were passengers passed and repassed another of similar size, construction, and speed, likewise responsibly charged with busy, living freight, and bound in the same direction. Occasionally, during their headlong and dangerous course, the contiguity of the two boats was such as to excite the serious alarm of one sex, and the unmeasured censure of the other The rumour began to be circulated that they were racing, and racing desperately. Some few, regardless of danger, and entering upon the interest of the chase with an insane and foolish excitement, watched with pleased eagerness the mad career of rival ambition; but by far the majority of the company, including all persons of reason and sense, looked on in indignation and fear. The usual stopping places on the river were either recklessly passed by, or only paused at, while, with indecent haste, passengers were shuffled backwards and forwards, at the risk of life and limb, their baggage (or somebody's else) unceremoniously flung after them, the panting, snorting engine in the meantime bellowing with rage at the check thus unwillingly imposed upon its freedom. Towards noon the fever of agitation had reached its height, and could not be wholly quieted even by the assurance from headquarters that there was no danger.

Gertrude sat with her hand locked in Emily's, anxiously watch-

ing every indication of terror, and endeavouring to judge from the countenances and words of her most intelligent-looking fellow-travellers the actual degree of their insecurity. Emily, shut out from the sight of all that was going on, but rendered, through her acute hearing, vividly conscious of the prevailing alarm, was perfectly calm, though very pale, and from time to time questioned Gertrude concerning the vicinity of the other boat, a collision with which was the principal cause of fear.

At length their boat for a few moments distanced its competitor. The assurance of perfect safety was impressively asserted, anxiety began to be relieved, and, most of the passengers being restored to their wonted composure, the various parties scattered about the deck and resumed their newspapers or their conversation The gay group to which Isabel Clinton belonged, several of whom had been the victims of nervous agitation and trembling, seemed reassured, and began once more to talk and laugh merrily. Emily, however, still looked pallid, and, as Gertrude fancied, a little faint "Let us go below, Emily," said she; "it appears now to be very quiet and safe. There are sofas in the ladies' cabin, where you can lie down; and we can both get a glass of water."

Emily assented, and in a few minutes was comfortably reclining in a corner of the saloon, where she and Gertrude remained undisturbed until dinner-time. They stayed quietly where they were, while the greater part of the passengers crowded from every part of the boat to invigorate themselves, after their fright, by the enjoyment of a comfortable meal.

Gertrude opened her travelling-basket and took out the packages which contained their luncheon It consisted merely of such dry morsels as had been hastily collected and put up at their hotel in Albany by Dr Jeremy's direction. Gertrude looked from the little withered slices of tongue and stale bread to the veteran sponge-cakes which completed the assortment, and was hesitating which she could most consciously recommend to Emily, when a civil-looking waiter appeared, bearing a huge tray of refreshments, which he placed upon the table close by, at the same time turning to Gertrude and asking if there was anything else he could serve her with.

"This is not for us," said Gertrude "You have made a mistake"

"No mistake," replied the man "Orders was for de blind lady and hansum young Miss I only 'beys orders Anyting furder, Miss?"

Gertrude dismissed the man with the assurance that they

wanted nothing more, and then, turning to Emily, asked, with an attempt at cheerfulness, what they should do with this Aladdin-like repast.

"Eat it, my dear, if you can," said Emily; "it is no doubt meant for us."

"But to whom are we indebted for it?"

"To my blindness and your beauty, I suppose," said Emily, smiling. She then continued, with wonderful simplicity, "Perhaps the chief steward took pity on our inability to come to dinner, and so sent the dinner to us. At any rate, my child, you must eat it before it is cold."

"I?" said Gertrude, conscious of her utter want of appetite. "I am not hungry; but I will select a nice bit for you."

The sable waiter, when he came to remove the dishes, really looked sad to see how little they had eaten. Gertrude drew out her purse, and after bestowing a fee upon the man, enquired whom she should pay for the meal.

But before the man could give her any reply, another white-aproned individual appeared, and beckoned to his fellow-waiter, who thereupon snatched up his tray and trotted off, leaving Gertrude and Emily to wonder who the benevolent gentleman might be.

Dinner concluded, Emily again lay down, advised Gertrude to do the same, and, supposing that her advice was being followed, slept for an hour; while her companion sat by, watching the peaceful slumber of her friend, and carefully and noiselessly brushing away every fly that threatened to disturb her repose.

"What time is it?" asked she on awakening.

"Nearly a quarter past three," replied Gertrude.

Emily started up. "We can't be far from New York," said she. "Where are we now?"

"I don't know exactly," replied Gertrude. "I think we must be near the Palisades; if you will stay here I will go and see." She passed across the saloon, and was about ascending the staircase, when she was startled and alarmed by a rushing sound, mingled with the hurried tread of feet. She kept on, however, though once or twice jostled by persons with frightened faces, who crowded past, and pressed forward to learn the cause of the commotion. She had just gained the head of the stairway, and was looking fearfully round her, when a man rushed past, gasping for breath, his face of an ashen paleness, and shrieking the horrid word of alarm—"Fire—fire!"

A second more, and a scene of dismay and confusion ensued too terrible for description. Shrieks rose upon the air, groans

and cries of despair burst forth from hearts that were breaking with fear for others, or maddened at the certainty of their own destruction. Each called upon each for help, when all were alike helpless Those who had never prayed before, poured out their souls in fervent ejaculation, "O, my God!" Many a brain reeled in that time of darkness and peril. Many a brave spirit sickened and sunk under the fearfulness of the hour.

Gertrude straightened her slight figure, and, with her dark eyes almost starting from their sockets, gazed around upon every side All was alike tumult; but the destroyer was as yet discernible in one direction only. Towards the centre of the boat, where the machinery, heated to the last degree, had fired the parched and inflammable vessel, a huge volume of flame was already visible, darting out its fiery fangs, and causing the stoutest heart to shrink and crouch in horror. She gave but one glance, then bounded down the stairs, bent solely on rejoining Emily But she was arrested at the very onset. One step only had she taken when she felt herself encircled by a pair of powerful arms, and a movement made to again rush with her upon deck, while a familiar voice gasped forth the words, "Gertrude, my child! my own darling! Be quiet—be quiet—I will save you!"

Well might he urge her to be quiet, for she was struggling madly

"No, no!" shouted she "Emily! Emily! Let me die! let me die! but I must find Emily!"

"Where is she?" asked Mr. Phillips, for it was he

"There, there," pointed Gertrude—"in the cabin. Let me go! let me go!"

He cast one look around him, then said, in a firm tone, "Be calm, my child! I can save you both; follow me closely!"

With a leap he cleared the staircase, and rushed into the cabin. In the farthest corner knelt Emily, her head thrown back, her hands clasped, and her face like the face of an angel

Gertrude and Mr Phillips were by her side in an instant He stooped to lift her in his arms, Gertrude at the same time exclaiming, "Come, Emily, come! He will save us!"

But Emily resisted "Leave me, Gertrude, leave me, and save yourselves! O!" said she, looking imploringly in the face of the stranger, "leave me, and save my child" Ere the words had left her lips, however, she was borne half-way across the saloon, Gertrude following closely.

"If we can cross to the bows of the boat, we are safe!" said Mr. Phillips, in a husky voice

To do so, however, proved impossible. The whole centre of the boat was now one sheet of flame. "Good heavens!" exclaimed he, "we are too late! We must go back!"

A moment more, and they had with much difficulty regained the long saloon And now the boat, which, as soon as the fire was discovered, had been turned towards the shore, struck upon the rocks, and parted in the middle. Her bows were consequently brought near to the land, near enough to almost ensure the safety of such persons as were at that part of the vessel. But alas for those near the stern, which was far out in the river, while the breeze, which blew fresh from the shore, fostered and spread the devouring flame in the very direction to place those who yet clung to the broken fragment between two equally fatal elements

Mr. Phillips's first thought, on gaining the saloon, was to beat down a window-sash, spring upon the guards, and drag Emily and Gertrude after him Some ropes hung upon the guards; he seized one, and, with the ease and skill of an old sailor, made it fast to the boat; then turned to Gertrude, who stood firm and unwavering by his side

"Gertrude," said he, speaking distinctly and steadily, "I shall swim to the shore with Emily. If the fire comes too near, cling to the guards, as a last chance, hold on to the rope Keep your veil flying; I shall return."

"No, no!" cried Emily. "Gertrude, go first"

"Hush, Emily," exclaimed Gertrude, "we shall both be saved!"

"Cling to my shoulder in the water, Emily," said Mr. Phillips, utterly regardless of her protestations. He took her once more in his arms, there was a splash, and they were gone. At the same instant Gertrude was seized from behind. She turned, and found herself grasped by Isabel Clinton, who, kneeling upon the platform, and frantic with terror, was clinging so closely to her as utterly to disable them both, at the same time shrieking in pitiable tones, "O, Gertrude, Gertrude, save me!"

Gertrude tried to lift her up, but she was immovable, and, without making the slightest effort to help herself, was madly winding Gertrude's thick travelling dress round her person, as if for a protection from the flames, while ever, as they darted forth new and nearer lightnings, the frightened girl would cling more wildly to her companion in danger, at the same time praying, with piercing shrieks, that she would help and save her

But so long as Gertrude stood thus imprisoned and restrained by the arms which were clasped entirely around her, she was powerless to do anything for her own or Isabel's salvation. She

looked forth in the direction Mr. Phillips had taken, and, to her joy, she saw him returning. He had deposited Emily on board a boat, which was fortunately at hand, and was now approaching to claim another burden. At the same instant, a volume of flame swept so near the spot where the two girls were stationed, that Gertrude, who was standing upright, felt the scorching heat, and both were almost suffocated with smoke

And now a new and heroic resolution took possession of the mind of Gertrude One of them could be saved, for Mr. Phillips was within a few rods of the wreck. It should be Isabel! She had called on her for protection, and it should not be denied her! Moreover, Willie loved Isabel! Willie would weep for her loss, and that must not be He would not weep for Gertrude—at least, not much; and if one must die, it should be she.

With Gertrude, to resolve was to do. "Isabel," said she, in a tone of such severity as one might employ towards a refractory child with whom, as in this instance, milder remonstrances had failed, "Isabel, do you hear me? Stand up on your feet; do as I tell you, and you shall be saved. Do you hear me, Isabel?"

She heard, shuddered, but did not move

Gertrude stooped down, and forcibly wrenching apart the hands which were convulsively clenched, said, with a sternness which necessity alone extorted from her, "Isabel, if you do as I tell you, you will be on shore in five minutes, safe and well, but if you stay there, behaving like a foolish child, we shall both be burned to death. For mercy's sake, get up quickly, and listen to me!"

Isabel rose, fixed her eyes upon Gertrude's calm, steadfast face, and said, in a moaning tone, "What must I do? I will try."

"Do you see that person swimming this way?"

"Yes."

"He will come to this spot Hold fast to that piece of rope, and I will let you gradually down to the water But stay!"—and snatching the deep blue veil from her own head, she tied it round the neck and flung it over the fair hair of Isabel Mr Phillips was within a rod or two. "Now, Isabel, now!" exclaimed Gertrude, "or you will be too late" Isabel took the rope between her hands, but shrunk back, appalled at the sight of water One more hot burst of fire, however, which issued forth through the window, gave her renewed courage to brave a mere seeming danger, and, aided by Gertrude, who helped her over the guards, she allowed herself to be let down to the water's edge. Mr Phillips was fortunately just in time to save her, for she was so utterly exhausted with fear, that she could not have clung long

to the rope. Gertrude had no opportunity to follow them with her eye; her own situation, it may well be believed, was now all-engrossing. The flames had reached her. She could hardly breathe, so enveloped was she in clouds of dark smoke, which had more than once been relieved by streaks of fire, which had darted out within a foot of her. She could hesitate no longer She seized the piece of rope, now left vacant by Isabel, who was rapidly approaching a place of safety, and, grasping it with all her might, leapt over the side of the fast-consuming vessel. How long her strength would have enabled her thus to cling—how long the guards, as yet unapproached by the fire, would have continued a sure support for the cable—there was no opportunity to test, for, just as her feet touched the cold surface of the river, the huge wheel, which was but a little distance from where she hung, gave one sudden, expiring revolution, sounding like a death-dirge through the water, which came foaming and dashing up against the side of the boat, and as it swept away again, bore with it the light form of Gertrude!

CHAPTER XLI

SUSPENSE

Let us now revisit calmer scenes, and turn our eyes towards the quiet, familiar country-seat of Mr. Graham.

The old gentleman himself, wearied with travels, and society but little congenial to his years, is pacing up and down his garden walks, his contented, satisfied countenance denoting plainly enough how rejoiced he is to find himself once more in his cherished homestead. Perhaps he would not like to acknowledge it, but it is nevertheless a fact, that no small part of his satisfaction arises from the circumstance that the repose and seclusion of his household are rendered complete and secure by the temporary absence of its bustling, excitable mistress, whom he has left behind him in New York. There is something pleasant, too, in being able to indulge his imagination so far as almost to deceive himself into the belief that the good old times have come back again when he was his own master.

Emily and Gertrude are closely associated with those good old times; and it adds greatly to the delusion of his fancy to dwell upon the certainty that they are both in the house, and that he shall see them at dinner.

Yes, Gertrude is there as well as the rest, saved—she hardly knew how—from the watery grave that threatened and almost engulfed her, and established once more in the peaceful and endeared spot, now the dearest to her on earth.

When with some difficulty restored to the consciousness which had utterly forsaken her in the protracted struggle between death and life, she was informed that she had been found and picked up by some humane individuals, who had hastily pushed a boat from the shore, and aided in the rescue of the sufferers; that she was clinging to a chair, and that her situation was such that, a moment more, and it would have been impossible to save her

A few hours from the time of the terrible catastrophe brought Mr Graham to the scene, and the next day restored all three in safety to the long-deserted old mansion house in D——.

This respectable, venerable habitation, and its adjoining grounds, wore nearly the same aspect as when they met the admiring eyes of Gerty on the first visit that she made Miss Graham in her early childhood

But how is it with the inmates?

Mr Graham, although some features of his character are too closely inwrought to be ever wholly eradicated, is, in many respects, a changed man The time had once been when he would have resisted courageously every innovation upon his domestic prejudices and comforts, but old age and ill health had somewhat broken his spirit, and subdued his hitherto invincible will

No wonder, therefore, that he looked forward to a few weeks of old-fashioned enjoyment much as a schoolboy does to his vacation

Emily is sitting in her own room, carelessly clad in a loose wrapper. She is paler than ever, and her face has an anxious, troubled expression. Every time the door opens she starts, trembles, a sudden flush overspreads her face, and twice already during the morning she has suddenly burst into tears Her nervous system is evidently fearfully shattered, and Gertrude looks at her and weeps, and wonders to see how her wonted calmness and composure have forsaken her.

They have been together since breakfast, but Emily will not allow Gertrude to stay with her any longer She must go away and walk, or at least change the scene She may come back in an hour and help her to dress for dinner. Gertrude feels that Emily is in earnest, that she really wishes to be left alone, and, believing that, for the first time, *her* presence even is burdensome, she retires to her own room, leaving Emily to bow

her head upon her hands and, for the third time, utter a few hysterical sobs.

Gertrude is immediately followed by Mrs Ellis, who shuts the door, seats herself, and, with a manner of her own, alone sufficient to excite alarm, adds to the poor girl's fear and distress by declaiming at length upon the dreadful effect the recollection of that shocking accident is having upon poor Emily. "She's completely upset," is the housekeeper's closing remark; "and if she don't begin to get better in a day or two, I don't hesitate to say there's no knowing what the consequences may be."

Fortunately for poor Gertrude, Mrs. Ellis is at length summoned to the kitchen, and she is left to reflect upon the strange circumstances of the last few days—days fraught to her with matter of thought for years, if so long a time had been allowed her. A moment, however, and she is again interrupted. The housemaid has something for her. A letter! With a trembling hand she receives it, scarcely daring to look at the writing or post-mark. Her first thought is of Willie, but before she can indulge either a hope or a fear on that score, the illusion is dispelled, for the handwriting is wholly strange. Another idea, of scarcely less moment, flashes into her mind, and, hardly able to breathe from the violence of the emotions by which she is oppressed, she breaks the seal and reads—

"My darling Gertrude,—My much-loved child—for such you indeed are, though a father's agony of fear and despair alone wrung from me the words that claimed you. It was no madness that, in the dark hour of danger, compelled me to clasp you to my heart and call you mine. A dozen times before had I been seized by the same emotion, and as often had it been subdued and smothered. And even now I would crush the promptings of nature, and depart and weep my poor life away alone, but the voice within me has spoken once, and cannot again be silenced. Had I seen you happy, gay, and light-hearted, I would not have asked to share your joy, far less would I have cast a shadow on your path; but you are sad and troubled, my poor child, and your grief unites the tie between us closer than that of kindred, and makes you a thousand times my daughter.

"You have a kind and a gentle heart, my child. You have wept once for the stranger's sorrows; will you now refuse to pity, if you cannot love, the solitary parent who, with a breaking heart and a trembling hand, writes the ill-fated word that dooms him, perhaps, to the hatred and contempt of the only being on

earth with whom he can claim the fellowship of a natural tie? Twice before have I striven to utter it, and, laying down my pen, have shrunk from the cruel task. But hard as it is to speak, I find it harder to still the beating of my restless heart; therefore, listen to me, though it may be for the last time. Is there one being on earth whom you shudder to think of? Is there one associated only in your mind with deeds of darkness and of shame? Is there one name which you have from your childhood learned to abhor and hate, and in proportion as you love your best friend, have you been taught to shrink from and despise her worst enemy? It cannot be otherwise. Ah, I tremble to think how my child will recoil from her father when she learns the secret, so long preserved, so sorrowfully revealed, that he is PHILIP AMORY!"

As Gertrude looked up, when she had finished reading this strange and unintelligible letter, her countenance expressed only complete bewilderment—her eyes glistened with great tears, her face was flushed with wonder and excitement—but she was totally at a loss to account for the meaning of the stranger's words.

She sat for an instant gazing into vacancy, then springing suddenly up, with the letter grasped in one hand, ran across the entry towards Emily's room, to share with her the wonderful contents, and eagerly ask her opinion of their hidden meaning. She stopped, however, when her hand was on the door-lock. Emily was already ill—it would not do to distress or even disturb her, and retreating to her own room as hastily as she had come, Gertrude once more sat down to reperuso the singular words, and endeavour to find some clue to the mystery.

That Mr Phillips and the letter-writer were identical she at once perceived. It was no slight impression that his exclamation and conduct during the time of their imminent danger on board the boat had left upon the mind of Gertrude. During the three days that had succeeded the accident, the words, "My child, my own darling!" had been continually ringing in her ears and haunting her imagination. Now the blissful idea would flash upon her that the noble, disinterested stranger, who had risked his life so daringly in her own and Emily's cause, might indeed be her father, and every fibre of her being had thrilled at the thought, while her head grew dizzy and confused with the strong sensation of hope that agitated and almost overwhelmed her brain. Then, again, she had repulsed the idea, as suggesting only the height of impossibility and folly, and had compelled

herself to take a more rational and probable view of the matter, and believe that the stranger's words and conduct were merely the result of overwhelming excitement

Her first enquiries on recovering consciousness had been for the preserver of Emily and Isabel, but he had disappeared; no trace of him could be obtained

The same motives which now induced her to forbear consulting Emily concerning the mysterious epistle, had hitherto prevented her from imparting the secret of Mr. Phillips's inexplicable language and manner; but she had dwelt upon them none the less, and day and night had silently pondered, not only upon recent events, but on the entire demeanour of this strange man towards her, ever since the earliest moment of their acquaintance

The first perusal of the letter served only to excite and alarm her. But as she sat for more than an hour gazing upon the page which she read and re-read until it was blistered and blotted with the great tears that fell upon it, the varying expression of her face denoted the emotions that, one after another, possessed her, and which at last, snatching up a piece of paper, she committed to paper with a feverish rapidity that betrayed how deeply, almost fearfully, her whole being bent and staggered beneath the weight of contending hopes, anxieties, warmly enkindled affections, and gloomy, upstarting fears.

"My dear, dear Father,—If I may dare to believe that you are so, and if not that, my best of friends, how shall I write to you, and what shall I say, since all your words are a mystery? O that my noble friend were indeed my father! But alas! I feel a sad presentiment that the bright dream is all an illusion, an error. I never before remember to have heard the name of Philip Amory. My sweet, pure, and gentle Emily has taught me to love all the world, and hatred and contempt are foreign to her nature, and, I trust, to my own.

"Nor bid me think of yourself as a man of sin and crime. It cannot be It would be wronging a noble nature to believe it Gladly would I trust myself to repose on the bosom of such a parent, gladly would I hail the sweet duty of consoling the sorrows of one so self-sacrificing, so generous, whose life has been so freely offered for me, and for others whose existence was dearer to me than my own When you took me in your arms and called me your child, your darling child, I fancied that the excitement of that dreadful scene had for the moment disturbed your mind and brain so far as to invest me with a false identity—perhaps confound my image with that of some

loved and absent one. I now believe that it was no sudden madness, but rather that I have been all along mistaken for another, whose glad office it may perhaps be to cheer a father's saddened life, while I remain unrecognized, unsought—the fatherless, motherless one I am accustomed to consider myself. If you have lost a daughter, God grant she may be restored to you, to love you as I would do, were I so blessed as to be that daughter! And I—consider me not a stranger; let me be your child in heart; let me love, pray, and weep for you; let me pour out my soul in thankfulness for the kind care and sympathy you have already given me And yet, though I disclaim it all, and dare not, yes, dare not dwell for a moment on the thought that you are otherwise than deceived in believing me your child, my heart leaps up in spite of me, and I tremble and almost cease to breathe as there flashes upon me the possibility, the blissful God-given hope! No, no! I will not think of it, lest I should not bear to have it crushed! Oh, what am I writing? I know not. I cannot endure the suspense long; write quickly, or come to me, my father—for I will call you so once, though perhaps never again. "GERTRUDE"

Mr. Phillips—or rather Mr. Amory, for we will call him by his true name—had either forgotten or neglected to mention his address Gertrude did not observe this circumstance until she had folded and was preparing to direct her letter. She then recollected the unfortunate omission, and for a moment experienced a severe pang in the thought that her communication would never reach him. She was reassured, however, on examining the post-mark, which was evidently New York, to which place she unhesitatingly addressed her missive; and then, unwilling to trust it to other hands, tied on her bonnet, caught up a veil with which to protect and conceal her agitated face, and hastened to deposit the letter herself in the village post-office.

Gertrude's case seemed a peculiarly trying one. She had been already, for a week past, struggling with a degree of suspense and anxiety which agitated her almost beyond endurance; and now a new occasion of uncertainty and mystery had arisen, involving in its issues an almost equal amount of self-questioning and torture It seemed almost beyond the power of so young, so sensitive, and so inexperienced a girl to rally such self-command as would enable her to control her emotions, disguise them from observation, and compel her to endure alone and in silence this cruel dispensation of her destiny.

But she did do it, and bravely too She turned for help to Him

whose strength is made perfect in weakness. It is certain that, as she took her way towards home after depositing the letter in the postmaster's hand, the firmness of her step, the calm uplifting of her eye, gave token that she that moment conceived a brave resolve—a resolve which, during the two days that intervened ere she received the expected reply, never for one moment deserted her.

And it was this. She would endeavour to suspend for the present those vain conjectures, that fruitless weighing of probabilities, which served only to harass her mind and destroy her peace, she would ponder no more on matters which concerned herself, but would turn all her mental and her physical energy into some other and more disinterested channel, and patiently wait until the cloud which hung over her fate should be dissipated by the light of truth, and explanation triumph over mystery. And this she did with much benefit to herself.

CHAPTER XLII

TIES—NOT OF EARTH

In a private room of one of those first-class hotels in which New York city abounds, Philip Amory sat alone. It was evening. The window-curtains were drawn, the lamps burning brightly, giving a cheerful glow to the room, the comfortable appearance of which contrasted strongly with the pale countenance and desponding attitude of its solitary inmate, who, with his head bowed upon his hands, leaned upon a table in the centre of the apartment

He had sat for nearly an hour in precisely the same position, without once moving or looking up With his left hand, upon which his forehead rested, he had thrust back the wavy masses of his silvered hair, and as if their light weight were too oppressive for his heated brow; and the occasional movement of his fingers, as they were slowly passed to and fro beneath the graceful curls, alone gave evidence that he had not fallen asleep

Suddenly he started up, straightened his commanding figure to its full height, and slowly commenced pacing the room. A slight knock at the door arrested his steps, a look of nervous agitation and annoyance overspread his countenance, he again flung himself into his chair, and in reply to the servant's announcing

"A gentleman, sir," was preparing to say, "I cannot be interrupted"—but it was too late; the visitor had already advanced within the door.

The new-comer—a young man—stepped quickly and eagerly forward, but checked himself, somewhat abashed at the unexpected coldness of the reception he met from his host, who rose slowly and deliberately to meet his guest, while the cloud upon his countenance, and the frigid manner in which he touched the young man's cordially offered hand, seemed to imply that the latter's presence was unwelcome.

"Excuse me, Mr. Phillips," said William Sullivan, for it was he who had thus unintentionally forced an entrance to the secluded man; "I am afraid my visit is an intrusion."

"Do not speak of it," replied Mr. Amory. "I beg you will be seated," and he politely handed a chair.

Willie availed himself of the offered seat no further than to lean lightly upon it, while he said:

"You are changed since I last saw you."

"Changed! Yes, I am," returned the other absently.

"Your health, I fear, is not——"

"My health is excellent," said Mr. Amory, interrupting his unfinished remark. Then after a pause he added, "It is a long time since we met. I have not forgotten the debt I owe you for your timely interference between me and Ali, that Arab traitor, with his rascally army of Bedouin rogues."

"Do not name it," replied Willie. "Our meeting was fortunate indeed, but the benefit was as mutual as the danger to which we were alike exposed."

"You set but a modest value upon your conciliatory powers. To you, who are so well acquainted with the facts in the case, I can hardly claim the merit of frankness for the acknowledgment that it was only my own hot temper and stubborn will which exposed us both to the imminent danger which you were fortunately able to avert. No, no; you must not deprive me of the satisfaction of once more expressing my gratitude for your invaluable aid."

"You are making my visit," said Willie, smiling, "the very reverse of what it was intended to be. I did not come here this evening to receive, but, to the best of my ability, to render thanks."

"For what?" asked Mr. Amory abruptly. "You owe me nothing."

"The friends of Isabel Clinton owe you a debt of gratitude which it will be impossible for them ever to repay."

"You are mistaken, Mr. Sullivan; I have done nothing which places that young lady's friends under a particle of obligation to me"

"Did you not save her life?"

"Yes; but nothing was farther from my intention."

Willie smiled.

"It could have been no accident, I think, which led you to risk your own life to rescue a fellow-passenger."

"It was no accident, indeed, which led to Miss Clinton's safety from destruction. I am convinced of that But you must not thank *me*; it is due to another than myself that she does not now sleep in death."

"May I ask to whom you refer?"

"I refer to a dear and noble girl, whom I swam to that burning wreck to save. Her veil had been agreed upon as a signal between us. That veil, carefully thrown over the head of Miss Clinton, whom I found clinging to the spot assigned to—to her whom I was seeking, deceived me, and I bore in safety to the shore the burden which I had ignorantly seized from the gaping waters, leaving my own darling, who had been offered as a sacrifice to——"

"O, not to die!" exclaimed Willie

"No, to be saved by a miracle. Go, thank her for Miss Clinton's life."

"I thank God," said Willie with fervour, "that the horrors of such scenes of destruction are half redeemed by heroism like that."

The hitherto stern countenance of Mr. Amory softened as he listened to the young man's praise of Gertrude's self-devotion.

"Who is she? Where is she?" continued Willie

"Ask me not!" replied Mr Amory "I cannot tell you if I would I have not seen her since that ill-fated day."

His manner even more than his words seemed to intimate an unwillingness to enter into any further explanation regarding Isabel's rescue, and Willie, perceiving it, stood for a moment silent and irresolute. Then, advancing a step nearer, he said—

"Though you so utterly disclaim, Mr. Phillips, any participation in Miss Clinton's happy escape, I feel that my errand here would be but imperfectly fulfilled if I should fail to deliver the message which I bring to one who was, at least, the final means of her safety. Mr Clinton, the young lady's father, desired me to tell you that, in saving the life of his only surviving child, you have prolonged his own days, and rendered him grateful to that degree which words on his part are powerless to express;

but that, as long as his feeble life is spared, he shall never cease to bless your name, and pray to Heaven for its choicest gifts upon you and those who dwell next your heart."

There was a slight moisture in the clear, penetrating eye of Mr. Amory, but a bland and courteous smile upon his lip, as he said, in reply to Willie's words—

"All this from Mr. Clinton! But you surely do not mean to thank me wholly in his name, my friend. Have you nothing to say for your own sake?"

Willie looked surprised at the question, but replied unhesitatingly—

"Certainly, sir; as one of a large circle of acquaintances and friends whom Miss Clinton honours with her regard, you may rest assured that my gratitude for your disinterested exertions are unbounded; and not only on her account, but on that of every other whom you had the noble satisfaction of rescuing from death."

"Am I to understand, by your words, that you speak only as a friend of humanity, and that you felt no deep personal interest in any of my fellow-passengers?"

"I was unacquainted with nearly all of them. Miss Clinton was the only one whom I had known for any greater length of time than during two or three days of Saratoga intercourse; but I should certainly have felt deeply grieved at her death, since I have lately been continually in her society, and am aware that her father, my respected partner, who is now much enfeebled in health, could hardly have survived so severe a shock as the loss, under such harrowing circumstances, of an only child, whom he idolizes."

"You speak very coolly, Mr. Sullivan. Are you aware that the prevailing belief gives you credit for feeling more than a mere friendly interest in Miss Clinton?"

The gradual dilating of Willie's large grey eyes, as he fixed them enquiringly upon Mr. Amory—the half-scrutinizing, half-astonished expression which crept over his face as he deliberately seated himself in the chair, which, until then, he had not occupied—were sufficient evidence of the effect of the question so unexpectedly put to him.

"I either misunderstood you," said he, "or the prevailing belief is a most mistaken one."

"Then you never before heard of your own engagement?"

"Never, I assure you. Is it possible that so idle a report has obtained extensive circulation?"

"Sufficiently extensive for me, a mere spectator of Saratoga

life, to hear it not only whispered from ear to ear, but openly proclaimed as a fact"

"I am exceedingly surprised and vexed at what you tell me," said Willie. "Nonsensical and false as such a rumour is, it will very naturally, if it should reach Miss Clinton, be a source of annoyance to her."

"Do you refer to considerations of delicacy on the lady's part, or have you the modesty to believe that her pride would be wounded by having her name thus coupled with that of her father's junior partner? But, excuse me, perhaps I am stepping on dangerous ground, and your own pride may shrink from the frankness of my speech"

"By no means But, in answer to your question, I have not only reference to both the motives you name, but to many others, when I assert my opinion of the resentment Miss Clinton would probably cherish if the foolish talk you mention should reach her ears"

"Mr. Sullivan," said Mr Amory, drawing his chair nearer to Willie's, "are you sure you are not standing in your own light? Are you aware that undue modesty, coupled with false and overstrained notions of refinement, has before now stood in the way of many a man's good fortune, and is likely to interfere largely with your own?"

"How so? You speak in riddles."

"Handsome young fellows like you," continued Mr Amory, "can, I know, often command almost any amount of property for the asking, but many such chances rarely occur to one individual, and the world will laugh at you if you waste so fair an opportunity as that which you now enjoy"

"Opportunity for what? You surely do not mean to advise me——"

"I do, though. I am older than you are, and I know something of the world. A fortune is not made in a day, nor is money a thing to be despised. Mr. Clinton's life is, I dare say, enfeebled and almost worn out in toiling after that wealth which will soon be the inheritance of his daughter She is young, beautiful, and the pride of that high circle in which she moves Both father and daughter smile upon you Why, then, do you hesitate? I trust you are not deterred from taking advantage of your position by any romantic and chivalrous sense of inferiority on your part"

"Mr Phillips," said Willie, with evident embarrassment, "the peculiar relations in which I stand towards Mr Clinton have been such as of late to draw me into constant intercourse both

with himself and his daughter; and he therefore appears, perhaps, to the world more favourably disposed towards me than would be found to be the case should I aspire to his daughter's hand. The lady herself, too, has so many admirers, that it would be the height of vanity in me to believe——"

"Pooh, pooh!" exclaimed Mr. Phillips, springing from his chair, and clapping the young man upon the shoulder, "tell that, Sullivan, to a greater novice than I am! It is very becoming in you to say so; but (though I hate to flatter) a few slight reminders will hardly harm a youth who has such a very low opinion of his own merits. Pray, who was the gentleman for whose society Miss Clinton was, a few nights since, so ready to forgo the music of Alboni, and the smiles and compliments of a whole train of adorers? With whom did she, in comparison with all this, prefer a quiet moonlight walk in the garden of the United States Hotel?"

Willie hesitated a moment, while endeavouring to rally his recollection; then he exclaimed—

"I remember! That, then, was one of the causes of suspicion. I was, on that occasion, a messenger merely, to summon Miss Isabel to the bedside of her father, by whom I had been anxiously watching for hours, and who, on awaking from a long-protracted sleep, which had excited the alarm of the physician, enquired for his daughter with such eagerness, that I did not hesitate to interrupt the pleasure of the evening, and call her to the post of duty which awaited her in the cottage occupied by Mr. Clinton, at the farther extremity of the grounds, to which I accompanied her."

Mr. Amory almost laughed outright, and exclaimed—

"So much for watering-place gossip! But, these things apart, and there is every reason to believe, my dear Sullivan, that though the young lady's heart be still, like her fortune, in the united keeping of herself and her father, there is nothing easier than for you to win and claim them both. You are a rising young man, and possess business talent indispensable, I hear, to the elder party; if, with your handsome face, figure, and accomplishments, you cannot render yourself equally so to the younger, there is no one to blame but yourself."

Willie laughed.

"If I had that object in view, I know of no one to whom I would so soon come for encouragement as to you; but the flattering prospect you hold out is quite wasted upon me."

"Not if you are the man I think you," replied Mr. Amory. "I cannot believe you will be such a fool as to allow yourself to be

blinded to the opportunity you see held out before you of making that appearance in society, and taking that stand in life, to which your education and your personal qualities entitle you A union with Miss Clinton would entitle you immediately to such a position as years of assiduous effort could hardly win, and you would find yourself at twenty-five at the highest point in every respect to which you could possibly aspire; nor have you, I will venture to say, lived for six years utterly deprived of female society, without becoming proportionably susceptible to such uncommon grace and beauty as Miss Clinton's"

A moment's pause ensued, during which Mr. Amory sat watching the countenance of Willie, while he awaited his reply. He was not kept long in ignorance of the effect his glowing picture had produced.

"Mr. Phillips," said Willie, "I have not, indeed, spent many of the best years of my life toiling beneath a burning sun, and in a protracted exile from all that I held most dear, without being sustained and encouraged by high hopes, aims, and aspirations But you misjudge me greatly if you believe that the ambition that has hitherto spurred me on can find its gratification in those rewards which you have so vividly presented to my imagination. No, though these advantages may seem beyond the grasp of most men, I aspire to something higher yet, and should think my best endeavours wasted indeed if my hopes and wishes tended not to a still more glorious good"

"And to what quarter do you look for the fulfilment of such flattering prospects?" asked Mr. Amory

"Not to the gay circles of fashion," replied Willie, "nor yet to that moneyed aristocracy which awards to each man his position in life Young as I am, I have lived long enough, and seen enough of trial, to lay to heart the belief that the only blessings worth striving for are something more enduring, more satisfying, than doubtful honours, precarious wealth, or fleeting smiles"

"To what, then, may I ask, do you look forward?"

"To a *home*, and that, not so much for myself—though I have long pined for such a rest—as for another, with whom I hope to share it A year since"—and Willie's lip trembled, his voice shook with emotion, as he spoke—"there were others, beside that dear one whose image now entirely fills my heart, whom I had fondly hoped, and should deeply have rejoiced, to see reaping the fruits of my exertions But we were not permitted to meet again; and now—but pardon me; I did not mean to intrude upon you my private affairs"

"Go on," said Mr. Amory, "I deserve some degree of confidence

in return for the disinterested advice I have been giving you. I am interested in what you say"

"It is long since I have spoken freely of myself," said Willie; "but frankness is natural to me, and, since you profess a desire to learn something of my aim in life, I know of no motive I have for concealment The only relatives I had in the world—my mother and her aged father—are both gone; and I should now be so solitary as almost to long to follow them, but for one other whose love will bind me to earth so long as she is spared."

"And she?" exclaimed Mr. Amory, with an eagerness which Willie, engrossed with his own thoughts, did not observe.

"Is a young girl," continued Willie, "without family, wealth, or beauty, but with a spirit so elevated as to make her great—a heart so noble as to make her rich—a soul so pure as to make her beautiful"

Mr. Amory's attitude of fixed attention, his evident waiting to hear more, emboldened Willie to speak still further.

"There lived in the same house which my grandfather occupied, an old man, a city lamplighter He was poor, poorer even than we were, but, I will venture to say, there never was a better or a kinder-hearted person in the world. One evening, when engaged in his round of duty, he picked up and brought home a little ragged child, whom a cruel woman had just thrust into the street to perish with cold, or die a more lingering death in the almshouse; for nothing but such devoted care as she received from my mother and Uncle True could have saved the half-starved creature from the consequences of long-continued exposure and ill treatment Through their unwearied watching and efforts she was spared, to repay in after years all, and more than all, the love bestowed upon her

"In the atmosphere of love in which she now lived, she soon became a changed being; and when, in addition to the example and precepts taught her at home, a divine light was shed upon her life by one who, herself sitting in darkness, cast a halo forth from her own spirit to illumine those of all who are blessed with her presence, she became, what she has ever since been, a being to love and trust for a lifetime For myself, there were no bounds to the affection I soon came to cherish for the little girl, to whom I was first attracted by compassion merely.

"We were constantly together. I was her teacher, her protector, the partner of all her childish amusements; and she, on her part, was by turns an advising, consoling, sympathizing, and encouraging friend In this latter character she was indispensable to me, for she had a hopeful nature, and a buoyancy of spirit which often

on the road to fortune as you have thus far successfully followed, can, in his sober senses, have made a serious resolve to unite himself and his prospects with an insignificant little playmate, of unacknowledged birth, without beauty or fortune, unless there is already a standing engagement. May I ask if you are already shackled by promises?"

"I am not," replied Willie.

"Then listen to me for a moment. My motives are friendly when I beg you not to act rashly in a matter which will affect the happiness of your life. This Gerty will be a dead weight upon your hands—a constant drawback to all your efforts for the attainment of fashionable society, in which it is hardly to be expected she can be fitted to shine. You yourself pronounce her to be without wealth or beauty; of her family you know nothing, and have certainly little reason to expect that, if discovered, it would do her any credit. I believe, then, that I only speak from the dictates of common sense when I bid you beware how you make, in the disposal of yourself, such a very unequal bargain."

"I am very willing to believe, sir," said Willie, settling himself into a composed attitude, "that the arguments you have so powerfully brought to bear upon a question most important to my welfare are grounded upon calm reasoning, and a disinterested desire to promote my prosperity. But you have failed to convince me that Gertrude can in any way be a drawback or disadvantage to the man who shall be so fortunate as to call her his. For my own part, I desire no better, no more truly aristocratic position in life, than that to which she is so well entitled, and to which she would be one of the brightest ornaments—the aristocracy of true refinement, knowledge, grace, and beauty. You talk to me of wealth. Gertrude has no money in her purse, but her soul is the pure gold, tried in the furnace of sorrow and affliction, and thence come forth bright and unalloyed. You speak of family and an honourable birth. She has no family, and her birth is shrouded in mystery; but the blood that courses in her veins would never disgrace the race from which she sprung, and every throb of her unselfish heart allies her to all that is noble.

"Six years may have outwardly changed her much, but they cannot have robbed her of what I prize the most. She has charms over which time can have no power, a grace that is a gift of Heaven, a beauty that is eternal. Could I ask for more?

"Do not believe, then," continued he, after a short pause, "that my fidelity to my early playmate is an emotion of gratitude merely. It is true I owe her much—far more than I can ever repay; but the honest warmth of my affection for the noble girl

springs from the truest love of a purity of character and singleness of heart which I have never seen equalled "

"And she whom you love so well?—are you sure——" asked Mr. Phillips, speaking with a visible effort, and faltering ere he had completed his sentence

"No," answered Willie, anticipating the question. "I know what you would ask; I am *not* sure. I have no reason to indulge the hopes I have been dwelling upon so fondly, but I do not regret having spoken with such openness and candour, for, should she grieve my heart by her coldness, I should still be proud to have loved her. Until this time, ever since I gained my native land, I have been shackled with duties, which, sacred as they were, have chafed a spirit longing for freedom to follow its own impulses In this visit to you [and, as he spoke, he rose to depart] I have fulfilled the last obligation imposed upon me by my excellent friend, and to-morrow I shall be at liberty to go where duty alone prevented me from at once hastening"

He offered his hand to Mr. Amory, who grasped it with a cordiality very different from the feeble greeting he had given him on his entrance. "Good-bye," said he, "you carry with you my best wishes for a success which you seem to have so much at heart."

CHAPTER XLIII

THE LONG-LOOKED-FOR RETURNED

"Miss Gertrude," said Mrs Prime, opening the parlour door, putting her head cautiously in, looking round, and then advancing with a stealthy pace, like that of a favourite family cat which is venturing to step a little beyond its usual limits, "my! how busy you are! There's Miss Patty Pace——"

"I have been meaning to ask after her," exclaimed Gertrude "Is she alive and well yet?"

"She!" replied Mrs. Prime. "Lor, she won't never die! I came a purpose to speak to you about her The baker's boy brought an arrant from her, and she wants to see you the first chance she can get."

"Poor old thing!" said Gertrude. "I'll go and see her this very afternoon."

And Gertrude went. She found Miss Patty nearly bent double with rheumatism, dressed with less than her usual care, and

crouching over a miserable fire She appeared, however, to be in tolerable spirits, and hailed Gertrude's entrance by a cordial greeting.

Innumerable were the questions she put to Gertrude regarding her own personal experiences during the past year, and the movements of the circles in which she had been living She showed a special interest in Saratoga life, the latest fashions exhibited there, and the opportunities which the place afforded for forming advantageous matrimonial connections

"So you have not yet chosen a companion," said she, after Gertrude had patiently and good-naturedly responded to all her queries "That is a circumstance to be regretted Not," continued she, with a slight wave of the hand, "that it is ever too late in life for one to meditate the conjugal tie, which is often assumed with advantage by persons of fifty or more Existence, I may say, is twofold when it is shared with a congenial partner, and I had hoped that before now, Miss Gertrude, both you and myself would have formed such an alliance. Experience prompts me, when I declare the protection of the matrimonial union one of its greatest advantages"

"I hope you have not suffered from the want of it?" said Gertrude

"I have, Miss Gertrude, suffered incalculably. Let me impress upon you, however, that the keenest pangs have been those of the sensibilities, yes, the sensibilities—the finest part of our nature"

"I am sorry to hear that you have been thus grieved," said Gertrude "I should have supposed that, living quite alone, you might have been spared this trial"

"O, Miss Gertrude!" exclaimed the old lady, lifting up both hands,—"O that I had the wings of a dove, wherewith to flee away from my kindred! I fondly thought to have distanced them, but within the last revolving year they have discovered my retreat, and I can no longer elude their vigilance Hardly can I recover from the shock of one visitation—made, as I am convinced, for the sole purpose of taking an inventory of my possessions, and measuring the length of my days—before the vultures are again seen hovering round my dwelling But," exclaimed the old lady, raising her voice and inwardly chuckling as she spoke, "they shall fall into their own snare, for I will dupe every one of them yet!"

"I was not aware that you had any relations," said Gertrude; "and it seems they are such only in name"

"Name!" said Miss Pace emphatically, "I am animated with

gladness at the thought that they are not honoured with a cognomen which not one of them is worthy to bear. But, Miss Gertrude, you are a young lady of quick comprehension, and I avail myself of your contiguity to request at your hands a favour, such as I little thought once I should ever feel compelled to seek. I want you—I sent for you to write the last will and testament of Miss Patty Pace"

The poor woman's trembling voice evidenced a deep compassion for herself, which Gertrude could not help sharing, and she expressed a willingness to comply with her wishes as far as was in her power, at the same time declaring her utter ignorance of all the forms of law.

To Gertrude's astonishment, Miss Patty announced her own perfect acquaintance with all the legal knowledge which the case demanded; and in so complete and faultless a manner did she dictate the words of the important instrument, that, being afterwards properly witnessed, signed, and sealed, it was found at the end of a few months—at which time Miss Patty was called upon to give up her earthly trust—free from imperfection and flaw, and proved a satisfactory direction for the disposal of the inheritance It may be well to state here, however, that he who was pronounced sole heir to her really valuable property never availed himself of the bequest, otherwise than to make a careful bestowal of it among the most needy and worthy of her relatives.

The sole inheritor of her estates was William Sullivan, the knight of the rosy countenance; and the same chivalrous spirit which won Miss Patty's virgin heart, and gained for him her lasting favour, prompted him to disclaim and utterly refuse the acceptance of a reward so wholly disproportioned to the slight service he had rendered the old lady.

Though he could not fail to be amused, he was nevertheless deeply touched, by the preamble to the will, in which Miss Patty set forth in a most characteristic manner the feeling and motives which had influenced her in the choice of an heir to her possessions

Then followed an inventory of the estate—a most remarkable estate, consisting of odds and ends of everything, and finally a carefully and legally worded document, assigning the whole of the strange medley, without legacies or encumbrances, to the sole use and disposal of the appointed heir

Gertrude found it no easy task to gather and transfix in writing the exact idea which the old woman's rambling dictation was intended to convey; and it was two or three hours before

the manuscript was completed, and the patient and diligent scribe permitted to depart.

The sky was overcast, and a drizzling rain beginning to fall, as she commenced walking towards home; but the distance was not great, and the only damage she sustained was a slight dampness to her garments. Emily perceived it at once, however. "Your dress is quite wet," said she. "You must go and sit by the parlour fire I shall not go down until tea-time, but father is there, and will be glad of your company; he has been alone all the afternoon."

Gertrude found Mr Graham sitting in front of a pleasant wood fire, half dozing, half reading She took a book and a low chair and joined him. Finding the heat too great, however, she soon retreated to a sofa at the opposite side of the room.

Hardly had she done so when there was a ring at the front door bell. The housemaid, who was passing by the door, opened it, and immediately ushered in a visitor. It was Willie!

Gertrude rose, but trembling from head to foot, so that she dared not trust herself to take a step forward. Willie advanced into the centre of the room, then looked at Gertrude, bowed, hesitated, and said, "Miss Flint!—is she here?" The colour rushed into Gertrude's face. She attempted to speak, but failed.

It was not necessary. The blush was enough. Willie recognized her, and, starting forward, eagerly seized her hand. "Gerty! is it possible?"

The perfect naturalness and ease of his manner, the warmth and earnestness with which he took and retained her hand, reassured the agitated girl. The spell seemed partially removed For a moment he became in her eyes the Willie of old, and she found voice to exclaim, "O, Willie, you have come at last! I am so glad to see you!"

The sound of their voices disturbed Mr Graham, who had fallen into a nap, from which the ringing of the door bell and the entrance of a strange step had failed to arouse him. He turned round in his easy chair, then rose Willie dropped Gertrude's hand, and stepped towards him "Mr Sullivan," said Gertrude, with a feeble attempt at a suitable introduction. They shook hands, and then all three sat down.

And now all Gertrude's embarrassment returned She had seen Willie before; she was aware of his arrival, knew even the steamer in which he had come, but was anxious to conceal from him this knowledge She could not tell him, since he seemed so ignorant of the fact himself, that they had met

before; and it may well be imagined that she was at an utter loss what to do or say under the circumstances. Her embarrassment soon communicated itself to Willie; and Mr. Graham's presence, which was a restraint to both, made matters worse

Willie, however, first broke the momentary silence "I should hardly have known you, Gertrude I did not know you. How——"

"How did you come?" asked Mr Graham abruptly, apparently unconscious that he was interrupting Willie's remark.

"In the *Europa*," replied Willie. "She got into New York about a week ago"

"Out here, I meant," said Mr Graham, rather stiffly. "Did you come out in the coach?"

"O, excuse me, sir," said Willie, "I misunderstood you. No, I drove out from Boston in a chaise"

"Did anyone take your horse?"

"I fastened him in front of the house."

Willie glanced out of the window (it was now nearly dusk) to see that the animal was still where he had left him Mr. Graham settled himself in his easy chair, and looked into the fire There was another pause, more painful than the first—"You are changed, too," said Gertrude at last, in reply to Willie's unfinished comment Then, fearing he might feel hurt at what he must know to be true in more ways than one, the colour, which had retreated, mounted once more to her cheeks

He did not seem to feel hurt, however, but replied "Yes, an Eastern climate makes great changes; but I think I can hardly have altered more than you have. Why, only think, Gerty, you were a child when I went away! I suppose I must have known I should have found you a young lady, but I begin to think I never fully realized it."

"When did you leave Calcutta?"

"The latter part of February. I passed the spring months in Paris."

"You did not write!" said Gertrude in a faltering voice

"No, I was expecting to come across by every steamer, and wanted to surprise you."

Conscious that she had seemed far less surprised than he expected, she looked confused, but replied, "I was disappointed about the letters, but I am very glad to see you again, Willie."

"You can't be so glad as I am," said he, lowering his voice, and looking at her with great tenderness. "You seem more and more like yourself to me every minute that I see you. I

begin to think, however, that I ought to have written and told you I was coming."

Gertrude smiled. Willie's manner was so unchanged, his words so affectionate, that it seemed unkind to doubt his friendliness, although to his undivided love she felt she could have no claim

"No," said she; "I like surprises Don't you remember I always did"

"Remember! Certainly," replied he; "I have never forgotten anything that you liked"

Just at this moment Gertrude's birds, whose cage hung in the window at which Willie sat, commenced a little twittering noise, which they always made just at night He looked up "Your birds," said Gertrude; "the birds you sent me"

"Are they all alive?" asked he

"Yes, all of them"

"You have been a kind mistress to the little things They are very tender"

"I am very fond of them"

"You take such care of those you love, dear Gerty, that you are sure to preserve their lives as long as may be."

His tone, still more than his words, betrayed the deep meaning with which he spoke.

"Is Miss Graham well?" asked Willie

Gertrude related, in reply, that her nerves had been recently much disturbed by the terrible experiences through which she had passed, and led to the subject of the recent disaster, at which Gertrude forbore to mention her having been herself present

Willie spoke with feeling of the sad catastrophe, remarking that he had valued friends on board the boat, but was unaware that Miss Graham was among them.

Conversation between Gertrude and Willie had by this time assumed a footing of ease, and something of their former familiarity. The latter had taken a seat near her on the sofa that they might talk more unrestrainedly; for, although Mr. Graham might have dropped asleep again, for anything they knew to the contrary, it was not easy wholly to forget his presence There were many subjects, however, on which it would have seemed natural for them to speak, had not Gertrude purposely avoided them She neither felt prepared to receive nor willing to force the confidence on matters which must inevitably be influenced by his engagement with Miss Clinton, and therefore preserved utter silence on these topics, even tak-

ing pains to avoid them. And Willie, deeply grieved at this strange want of sympathy on her part, forbore to thrust upon her notice these seemingly forgotten circumstances.

At length a servant appeared at the door, and, not observing that there was company, announced tea. Mr. Graham rose, and stood with his back to the fire Willie rose also, and prepared to take leave. Mr. Graham, with frigid civility, invited him to remain, and Gertrude hesitated not to urge him to do so; but he declined with such decision, that the latter understood plainly that he perceived and felt the neglect with which Mr Graham had treated him and his visit.

Gertrude accompanied him to the door. The rain had ceased, but the wind whistled across the piazza. It seemed to be growing cold. Willie buttoned his coat, while he promised to see Gertrude on the following day.

"You have no overcoat," said she; "the night is chilly, and you are accustomed to a hot climate. You had better take this shawl;" and she took from the hat-tree a heavy Scotch plaid, which always hung there to be used on occasions like the present

He thanked her and threw it over his arm; then, taking both her hands in his, looked her steadily in the face for a moment, as if he would fain have spoken Seeing, however, that she shrank from his mild and affectionate gaze, he dropped her hands, bade her good-night, and ran down the door-steps

Gertrude stood with the handle of the door in her hand until she heard the sound of the horse's hoofs as he drove down the road; then, hastily shutting it, ran and hid herself in her own room. Well as she had borne up during the longed-for and yet much-dreaded meeting, calmly and naturally as she had sustained her part, her courage all forsook her now, and in looking forward to days, weeks, and months of frequent intercourse, she felt that the most trying part of the struggle was yet to come

Had Willie been wholly changed—had he seemed the thoughtless worldling, the fashionable man of society, the cold-hearted devotee of business or of gain—in one of which characters she had lately half-fancied he would appear—had he greeted her with chilling formality, with heartless indifference, or with awkward restraint, she might, while she despised, pitied, or blamed, have learned to love him less But he had come back as he went—open-hearted, generous, manly, and affectionate.

And she must school herself to the cruel task of seeing him day by day, hearing the story of his love for another, and

wishing him all joy, as a sister might do a kind and affectionate brother. She must learn to subdue the love whose depth and intensity she had scarcely known until now, and mould it into friendship. As she thought of all this, she found it impossible to still the wildly-beating waves that swelled against her aching, throbbing heart. She threw herself upon the bed and wept.

Presently there was a light tap at her door. Believing it to be a summons to the tea-table, she said, without rising, "Jane, is that you? I do not wish any supper."

"It isn't that, miss," said the girl; "but I have brought you a letter."

Gertrude sprang up and opened the door.

"A little boy handed it to me, and then ran off," said the girl, placing a package in her hand.

"Bring me a light," said Gertrude.

The girl went for a lamp, Gertrude in the meantime endeavouring to judge what a package of such unusual size and thickness could contain. And while she was wondering Jane brought a lamp, by the light of which she at once detected the handwriting, and, breaking the seal, drew from the envelope several closely written pages, whose contents she perused with all the eagerness and excitement which the weight, import, and the intense interest of the subject might well demand.

CHAPTER XLIV

THE FATHER'S STORY

It ran as follows:—

"MY DAUGHTER,—My loving, tender-hearted girl Now that your own words encourage me with the assurance that my worst fear was unfounded (the fear that my name was already blasted to your young ears, and your father doomed by your young heart to infamy)—now that I can appeal to you as an impartial witness, I will disclose the story of my life, and, while I prove to you your parentage, will hope that my unprejudiced child, at least, will believe, love, and trust her father, in spite of a world's injustice.

"I will conceal nothing.

"Mr. Graham is my stepfather, and my blessed mother, long since dead, was, in all but the tie of nature, a true mother to Emily Thus allied, however, to those whom you love best, I am parted from them by a heavy curse, for, not only was mine the ill-fated hand (O, hate me not yet, Gertrude!) which locked poor Emily up in darkness, but, in addition to that terrible deed, I stand accused in the eyes of my fellow-men of another crime, dark and disgraceful. And yet, though lying under a ban, I am innocent as a child of all intentional wrong, as you will learn, if you can trust to the truth of the tale I am about to tell.

"Nature gave and education fostered in me a rebellious spirit I was the idol of my invalid mother, who, though she loved me with a love for which I bless her memory, had not the energy to tame and subdue the passionate and wilful nature of her boy. Though ungoverned, however, I was neither cruelly nor viciously disposed; and though my sway at home and among my school-fellows was alike indisputable, I made many friends, and not a single enemy But a sudden check was at length put to my freedom My mother married, and I soon came to feel, and feel bitterly, the check which Mr. Graham was likely to impose upon my boyish independence. Had he treated me with kindness, had he won my affection, it is impossible to measure the influence he might have had in moulding my yet unformed character.

"But the reverse was the case His behaviour towards me was that of chilling coldness and reserve. He repelled with scorn the first advance on my part, which led me, at my mother's instigation, to address him by the paternal title—an offence of which I never again was guilty. And yet, while he seemed to ignore the relationship, he assumed its privileges and authority, thus wounding my feelings and my pride, and exciting a spirit of rebellious opposition to his commands

"Two things served to embitter my sentiments and strengthen my growing dislike to my overbearing stepfather One was the consciousness of my utter dependence on his bounty, the other, a hint, which I received through the mistaken kindness of a domestic who had always known the family, that Mr. Graham's dislike to me had its origin in an old enmity between himself and my own father

"Great, however, as was the warfare in my heart, power rested with Mr. Graham; for I was yet but a child, and necessarily subject to government—nor could I be deaf to my mother's entreaties that, for her sake, I would learn submission.

It was only occasionally, therefore, when I had been, as I considered, most unjustly thwarted, that I broke forth into direct rebellion, and even then there were influences ever at work to preserve at least outward harmony in our household. Thus years passed on, and, though I did not learn to love Mr. Graham more, the force of habit, the intense interest afforded by my studies, and a growing capability of self-control, rendered my mode of life far less obnoxious to me than it had once been.

"There was one great compensation for my trials, and that was the love I cherished for Emily, who responded to it with equal warmth on her part. I pause not to dwell upon the tenderness and depth of this affection; it is enough to say that it became the life of my life.

"At length my mother died. I was at that time—sorely against my will—employed in Mr. Graham's counting-house, and still continued an inmate of his family. And now, without excuse or even warning, my stepfather commenced a course of policy as unwise as it was cruel. He tried to rob me of the only thing that sweetened and blessed my existence—the love of Emily. I will not here recount the motives I imputed to him, nor the means he employed. It is sufficient to say that they were such as to change my former dislike into bitter hatred—my unwilling obedience to his will into open and deliberate opposition.

"Instead of submitting to what I considered his tyrannical interference, I sought Emily's society on all occasions, and persuaded the gentle girl to lend herself to my schemes for thwarting her father's purposes. I did not speak to her of love, I did not seek to bind her to me by promises, I hinted not at marriage—a sense of honour forbade it. But, with a boyish independence, which I have since feared was the height of folly and imprudence, I sought every occasion, even in her father's presence, to manifest my determination to maintain that constant freedom and familiarity of intercourse which had been the growth of circumstances, and could not without force be restrained.

"At length Emily was taken ill, and for six weeks I was debarred her presence. As soon as she was sufficiently recovered to leave her room, I constantly sought and at last obtained an opportunity to see and speak with her. We had been together in the library more than an hour when Mr Graham suddenly entered, and came towards us with a face whose harshness and severity I shall not soon forget. I did not heed

an interruption, for the probable consequences of which I believed myself prepared I was little prepared, however, for the nature of the attack actually made upon me

"That he would accuse me of disobedience to wishes which he had hinted in every possible way, and even intimate more plainly than before his resolve to place barriers between Emily and myself, I fully expected, and was ready with my replies, but when he burst forth with a torrent of unqualified and ungentlemanly abuse—when he stormed and raved, imputing to me mean, selfish, and contemptible motives, which had never for a moment influenced me, or even occurred to my mind—I was struck dumb with surprise, impatience, and anger

"But this was not all. It was then, in the presence of the pure-minded girl whom I worshipped, that he charged me with a dark and horrid crime—the crime of forgery—asserting my guilt as recently discovered, but positive and undoubted. My spirit had raged before—now it was on fire. I lifted my hand and clenched my fist What I would have done I know not Whether I should have found words to assert my innocence, fling back the lie, and refute a charge as unexpected as it was false—or whether, my voice failing me from passion, I should have swept Mr Graham from my path, perhaps felled him to the floor, while I strode away to rally my calmness in the open air, I cannot now conjecture; for a wild shriek from Emily recalled me to myself, and, turning, I saw her fall fainting upon the sofa

"Forgetting everything then but the apparently dying condition into which the horror of the scene had thrown her, I sprang forward to her relief There was a table beside her, and some bottles upon it I hastily snatched what I believed to be a simple restorative, and, in my agitation, emptied the contents of the phial in her face I know not what the exact character of the mixture could have been, but it matters not—its effect was too awfully evident The deed was done—the fatal deed—and mine was the hand that did it!

"Brought suddenly to consciousness by the intolerable torture that succeeded, the poor girl sprang screaming from the sofa, flung her arms wildly above her head, rushed in a frantic manner through the room, and finally crouched in a corner. I followed in an agony scarce less than her own, but she repelled me with her hands, at the same time uttering piercing shrieks. Mr Graham, who for an instant had looked like one paralysed by the scene, now rushed forward like a madman. Instead of aiding me in my efforts to lift poor Emily from the floor, and so far from

compassionating my situation, which was only less pitiable than hers, he, with a fierceness redoubled at my being, as he considered, the sole cause of the disaster, attacked me with a storm of jeering taunts and cruel reproaches, declaring that I had killed his child. With words like these, which are still ringing in my ears, he drove me from the room and the house, a repulsion which I, overpowered by the misery of contrition and remorse, had neither the wish nor the strength to resist.

"O! the terrible night and day that succeeded. I can give you no idea how they were passed I wandered out into the country, spent the whole night walking beneath the open sky, endeavouring to collect my thoughts and compose my mind, and still morning found me with fevered pulse and excited brain. With the returning light, I began to realize the necessity of forming some future plan of action.

"Emily's sad situation, and my intense anxiety to learn the worst effects of the fatal accident, gave me the strongest motives for hastening with the earliest morning, either openly or by stealth, to Mr. Graham's house. Everything also which I possessed—all my money, consisting merely of the residue of my last quarter's allowance, my clothing, and a few valuable gifts from my mother—were in the chamber which I there occupied. There seemed, therefore, to be no other course left for me than to return thither once more, at least; and having thus resolved, I retraced my steps to the city, determined, if it were necessary in order to gain the desired particulars concerning Emily, to meet her father face to face As I drew near the house, however, I hesitated, and dared not proceed Mr Graham had exhausted upon me already every angry word, had threatened even deeds of violence should I ever again cross his threshold, and I feared to trust my own fiery spirit to a collision in which I might be led on to an open resistance of the man whom I had already sufficiently injured.

"In the terrible work I had but yesterday done—a work of whose fatal effect I had even then a gloomy foreshadowing—I had blighted the existence of his worshipped child, and drawn a dark pall over his dearest hopes It was enough. I would not for worlds be guilty of the added sin of lifting my hand against the man who, unjust as he had been towards an innocent youth, had met a retaliation far, far too severe.

"Still, I knew his wrath to be unmitigated—was well aware of his power to excite my hot nature to frenzy, and resolved to beware how I crossed his path. Meet him I must to refute the false charges he had brought against me, but not within

the walls of his dwelling, the home of his suffering daughter In the counting-house, where the crime of forgery was said to have been committed, and in the presence of my fellow clerks, I would publicly deny the deed, and dare him to its proof But first I must either see or hear from Emily; before I met the father at all, I must learn the exact nature and extent of the wrong I had done him in the person of his child For this, however, I must wait until, under cover of the next night's darkness, I could enter the house unperceived

"So I wandered about all day in torment, without tasting or even desiring food or rest, the thought of my poor, darling, tortured Emily ever present to my wretched thoughts The hours seemed interminable. I remember that day of suspense as if it had been a whole year of misery. But night came at last, cloudy, and the air thickened with a heavy fog, which, as I approached the street where Mr. Graham lived, enveloped the neighbourhood, and concealed the house until I was directly opposite to it I shuddered at the sight of the physician's chaise standing before the door, for I knew that Dr. Jeremy had closed his visits to Emily more than a week previously, and must have been summoned to attend her since the accident. Finding him there, and thinking it probable Mr Graham was also in the house at this hour, I forbore to enter, but stood effectually concealed by the cloud of mist, and watching my opportunity.

"Once or twice Mrs Ellis, the housekeeper, passed up and down the staircase, as I could distinctly see through the side-lights of the door, which afforded me a full view of the entry-way· and presently Dr Jeremy descended slowly, followed by Mr Graham The doctor would have passed hastily out, but Mr Graham detained him, to question him regarding his patient, as I judged from the deep anxiety depicted on my stepfather's countenance, while he sought to read his opinion in his face The doctor's back was towards me, and I could only judge of his replies by the effect they produced on the questioner, whose haggard, worn appearance became more fearfully distressed at every syllable that fell from the honest and truthful lips of the medical man

"I needed, therefore, no further testimony to force upon me the conviction that Emily's fate was sealed, and, as I looked with pity upon the afflicted parent, and shudderingly thought how immediate had been my agency in the work of destruction, I felt that the unhappy father could not curse me more bitterly than I cursed myself Deeply, however, as I mourned, and have never ceased to repent, my share in the exciting of that storm

wherein the poor girl had been so cruelly shipwrecked, I could not forget the part that Mr Graham had borne in the transaction, or forgive the wicked injustice and insults which had so unnerved and unmanned me as to render my hand a fit instrument only of ruin, and as, immediately after the doctor's departure, I watched my stepfather also come down the steps and walk away, and saw by a street lamp that the look of pain had passed from his face, giving place to his usual composed, self-complacent, and arrogant expression, and understood, by the loud and measured manner in which he struck his cane upon the pavement, that he was far from sharing my humble, penitent mood, I ceased to waste upon him a compassion which he seemed so little to require or deserve; and pitying myself only, I looked upon his stern face with a soul which cherished for him no other sentiment than that of unmitigated hatred

"Do not shrink from me, Gertrude, as you read this frank confession of my passionate, and, at that moment, deeply stirred nature

"As Mr Graham turned the corner of the street, I approached his house, drew forth a passkey of my own, by means of which I opened the door, and went in I passed noiselessly upstairs, and entered a little chamber at the head of the passage which communicated with Emily's room I waited here a long time, hearing no sound and seeing no one, then fearing Mr. Graham would shortly return, I ascended to my own room, and collected my money and a few articles of value

"I then descended the back staircase to gain Mrs Prime's premises, when I suddenly encountered Mrs Ellis coming from the kitchen with a bowl of gruel in her hand This woman was a recent addition to the household, introduced there a few weeks before as a spy upon my actions, and intolerable to me on that account She stopped short on seeing me, gave a slight scream, dropped the bowl of gruel, and prepared to make her escape, as if from a wild beast

"I placed myself in her path, and compelled her to stop and listen to me But before my eager questions could find utterance, an outburst from her confirmed my worst fears

"'Let me go!' she exclaimed 'You villain! you will be putting my eyes out next!'

"'Where is Emily?' I cried 'Let me see her!'

"'See her!' replied she 'You horrid wretch! No! she has suffered enough from you. She is satisfied herself now, so let her alone.'

"'What do you mean?' shouted I, shaking the housekeeper

violently by the shoulder, for her words seared my very soul, and I was frantic.

"'Mean?' continued she. 'I mean that Emily will never see anybody again; and if she had a thousand eyes, you are the last person upon whom she would wish to look!'

"'Does Emily hate me, too?' burst from me then.

"The reply was ready. 'Hate you! Yes—more than that, she cannot find words that are bad enough for you! She mutters, even in her pain, 'Cruel!—wicked!' She shudders at the sound of your name, and we are all forbidden to speak it in her presence' I waited to hear no more, but rushed out of the house.

"That moment was the crisis of my life. The thunderbolt had fallen upon and crushed me. My hopes, my happiness, my fortune, my good name, had gone before; but one solitary light had, until now, glimmered in the darkness It was Emily's love. I had trusted in that—that only It had passed away, and with it my youth, my faith, my hope of heaven I was a blank on the earth, and cared not whither I went, or what became of me

"From that moment I ceased to be myself Then fell upon me the cloud in which I have ever since been shrouded, and under the shadow of which you have seen and known me In that instant the blight had come, my hair became prematurely grey; my fellow men, to whom it had been my noblest hope to prove some day a benefactor, were henceforth the armed hosts of antagonists, with whom I would wage endless war, and the God whom I had worshipped—whom I had believed in as a just and faithful friend and avenger,—who was He?—where was He?—and why did He not right my cause? What direful and premeditated deed of darkness had I been guilty of that He should thus desert me? Alas! I lost my faith in Heaven!

"I know not what direction I took on leaving Mr. Graham's house. I paused not until, having reached the end of a wharf, I found myself gazing down into the deep water, longing to take one mad leap, and lose myself in everlasting oblivion!

"But for this final blow, beneath which my manhood had fallen, I would have cherished my life, at least until I could vindicate its fair fame; I would never have left a blackened memory for men to dwell upon and Emily to weep over But now what cared I for my fellow men? I longed for nothingness and the grave

"There are moments in human life when a word, a look, or a thought may weigh down the balance in the scales of fate and decide a destiny.

"So it was with me now. Incapable of forming any plan for myself, I was startled from the apathy into which I had fallen

by the sudden splashing of oars in the water beneath, and in a moment a little boat was moored to a pier within a rod of the spot where I stood. At the same instant I heard quick footsteps on the wharf, and, turning, saw by the light of the moon a stout seafaring man, with a heavy pea-jacket under one arm, and a carpet bag in his left hand. He had a ruddy, good-humoured face, and as he approached, and was about to pass me and leap into the boat, where two sailors were awaiting him, he slapped me heartily on the shoulder and exclaimed, 'Well, my fine fellow, will you ship with us?'

"I answered as readily in the affirmative; and, with a glance at my dress, which seemed to assure him of my station in life, and probable ability to make compensation for the passage, he said in a laughing tone, 'In with you, then!'

"To his astonishment I sprang into the boat, and in a few moments was on board of a fine barque, bound I knew not whither.

"The vessel's destination proved to be Rio Janeiro—a fact which I did not learn, however, till we had been two or three days at sea, and to which, even then, I felt wholly indifferent. There was one other passenger beside myself—the captain's daughter, Lucy Grey, whom, during the first week, I scarcely noticed, but who appeared to be as much at home, whether in the cabin or on deck, as if she had passed her whole life at sea I might, perhaps, have made the entire passage without giving another thought to this young girl—half child, half woman—had not my strange and mysterious behaviour led her to conduct herself in a manner which at first surprised, and finally interested me. My wild and excited countenance, my constant restlessness, avoidance of food, and apparent indifference to everything that went on about me, excited her wonder and sympathy to the utmost. She at first believed me partially deranged, and treated me accordingly. She would take a seat on deck directly opposite mine, look in my face for an hour, either ignorant or regardless of my observing her, and then walk away with a heavy sigh Occasionally she would come and offer me some little delicacy, begging that I would try and eat; and as, touched by her kindness, I took food more readily from her hand than any other, these little attentions became at last habitual. As my manners and looks grew calmer, however, and I settled into a melancholy which, though equally deep, was less fearful than the feverish torment under which I had laboured, she became proportionately reserved; and when, at last, I began to appear somewhat like my fellow men, went

regularly to the table, and, instead of pacing the deck all night, spent a part of it, at least, quietly in my stateroom, Lucy absented herself wholly from that part of the vessel where I passed the greater portion of the day, and I seldom exchanged a word with her, unless I purposely sought her society

"We experienced much stormy weather, however, which drove me to the cabin, where she usually sat on the transom, reading or watching the troubled waves, and, as the voyage was very long, we were necessarily thrown much in each other's way, especially as Captain Grey, the same individual who had invited me to ship with him, and who seemed still to take an interest in my welfare, goodnaturedly encouraged an intercourse by which he probably hoped I might be won from a state of melancholy that seemed to astonish and grieve the jolly shipmaster almost as much as it did his kind-hearted, sensitive child

"Lucy's shyness, therefore, wore gradually away, and before our tedious passage was completed I ceased to be a restraint upon her She talked freely with, or rather to me, for, while I maintained a rigid silence concerning my own past experiences, of which I could scarcely endure to *think*, much less to *speak*, she exerted herself freely for my entertainment, and related with simple frankness almost every circumstance of her past life. She told me that until she was fourteen years old she lived with her mother in a little cottage on Cape Cod, their home being only occasionally enlivened by the return of her father from his long absences at sea. They would then usually make a visit to the city where his vessel lay, pass a few weeks in uninterrupted enjoyment, and at length return home to mourn the departure of the cheerful, light-hearted sea captain, and patiently count the weeks and months until he would come back again

"She told me how her mother died at last, how bitterly she mourned her loss, and how her father wept when he came home and heard the news, how she had lived on ship-board ever since, and how sad and lonely she felt in time of storms, when, the master at his post of duty, she sat alone in the cabin, listening to the roar of the winds and waves

"Tears would come into her eyes when she spoke of these things, and I would look upon her with pity, as one whom sorrow made my sister. Trial, however, had not yet robbed her of an elastic, buoyant spirit, and when, five minutes after the completion of some eloquent little tale of early grief, the captain would approach unseen, and surprise her by a sudden joke, exclamation, or sly piece of mischief, thus provoking her to

retaliate, she was always ready and alert for a war of wits, a laughing frolic, or even a game of romps. Her sorrow forgotten, and her tears dried up, her merry voice and her playful words would delight her father, and the cabin or the deck would ring with his joyous peals of laughter; while I, shrinking from a mirth and gaiety sadly at variance with my own unhappiness, would retire to brood over miseries for which it was hopeless to expect sympathy, and with which I must dwell alone.

"But I must not linger too long upon the details of our life on ship-board; for I have to relate events which occupied many years, and must confine myself, as far as possible, to a concise statement of facts. I must forbear giving any account of terrific gale that we encountered, during which, for two days and a night, poor Lucy was half frantic with fear; while I, careless of outward discomforts, and indifferent to personal danger, was afforded an opportunity to requite her kindness by such protection and encouragement as I was able to render. But this, and various other incidents of the voyage, all bore a part in inspiring her with a degree of confidence in me, which, by the time we arrived in port, was put to a severe and somewhat embarrassing test.

CHAPTER XLV

THE LOST CHILD RESTORED

"Captain Grey died. We were within a we[illegible] sail of our destination when he was taken ill, and, three days before we were safely anchored in the harbour of Rio, he breathed his last. I shared with Lucy the office of ministering to the suffering man, closed his eyes at last, and carried the fainting girl in my arms to another part of the vessel. With kind words and persuasions I restored her to her senses; and then, as the full consciousness of her desolation rushed upon her, she sank at once into a state of hopeless despondency. Captain Grey had made no provision for his daughter. Well might the poor girl lament her sad fate, for she was without a relative in the world, penniless, and approaching a strange shore. We buried her father in the sea; and, that sad office fulfilled, I sought Lucy, and endeavoured, as I had several times tried to do without success, to arouse her to a sense of her situation, and advise with her concerning

the future; for we were now so near our port, that in a few hours we might be compelled to leave the vessel and seek quarters in the city. She listened to me without replying.

"At length I hinted at the necessity of my leaving her, and begged to know if she had any plans for the future. She answered me only by a burst of tears.

"Then, with many sobs, she threw herself upon my compassion, and, with unaffected simplicity and child-like artlessness, entreated me not to leave her. She reminded me that the moment she stepped foot on shore she should be in a land of strangers, and besought me not to forsake and leave her to die alone

"What could I do? I had nothing on earth to live for. We were both alike orphaned and desolate. There was but one point of difference I could work and protect her; she could do neither for herself It would be something for *me* to live for, and for *her*, though but a refuge of poverty and want, it was better than the exposure and suffering that must otherwise await her. I told her plainly how little I had to offer, but that I was ready to labour in her behalf, to guard her from danger, to pity, and, perhaps, in time, learn to love her.

"The unsophisticated girl had never thought of marriage; she had sought the protection of a friend, not a husband, but, in the humility of sorrow, she finally accepted my unflattering offer.

"The only witness to the marriage, which within a few hours ensued, was an old, weather-beaten sailor, who had known and loved Lucy from her childhood, and whose name will be, perhaps, familiar to you—Ben Grant He accompanied us on shore, and to the church, which was our first destination. He followed us to the humble lodgings with which we contrived for the present to be contented, and devoted himself to Lucy with self-sacrificing, but in one instance, alas! with fatal zeal

"After much difficulty, I obtained employment from a man engaged in trade, who willingly employed me as clerk, occasionally despatching me from home to transact business at a distance My duties being regular and profitable, I was soon enabled to place my young wife in a situation that ensured comfort, if not luxury.

"The sweetness of her disposition, the cheerfulness with which she endured privation, the earnestness with which she strove to make me happy, were not without effect, and the few months that I passed with your mother, Gertrude, form a sweet episode in the memory of my stormy life. I came to love her much—not as I loved Emily; that could not be expected,—but, as the solitary flower bloomed on the grave of all my early hopes, she cast a fragrance round my path, and her child is not more dear

to me because a part of myself, than as the memento of the cherished blossom snatched hastily from my hand and rudely crushed

"About two months after your birth the business in which I was engaged called me, in the capacity of an agent, to a station at some distance from Rio. I had been absent nearly a month, had extended my journey beyond my original intentions, and had written regularly to Lucy, informing her of all my movements (though I have since believed that the letters never reached her), when the neighbourhood in which I was stationed became infected with a fatal malaria I was seized with the fever, and lay for weeks at the point of death After an almost interminable illness, I made my way, destitute, ragged, and emaciated, back to Rio I sought my former home. It was deserted, and I was warned to flee from its vicinity, as the fearful disease of which I had already been the prey had nearly depopulated that and the neighbouring streets. I made every enquiry, but could obtain no intelligence of my wife and child. I lingered about the city for weeks, in hopes to gain some information concerning Lucy, but could find no one who had ever heard of her. All day I wandered about the streets and on the wharves—the latter being places which Ben Grant (in whose faithful charge I had left your mother and yourself) was in the habit of frequenting—but not a syllable could I learn of any persons that answered my description.

"My first thought had been that they would naturally seek my employer, to learn, if possible, the cause of my prolonged absence, and, on finding my home empty, I had hastened in search of him. But he, too, had, within a recent period, fallen a victim to the prevailing distemper, and his place of business was closed. I prolonged my search until hope died within me I madly agreed to work my passage in the first vessel which promised me an escape from scenes so fraught with harrowing recollections.

"And now commenced in truth that course of wretched wandering which, knowing neither pause nor cessation, has made up the sum of my existence With varied ends in view, following strongly contrasted employments, and with fluctuating fortune, I have travelled over the world My feet have trodden almost every land, I have sailed upon every sea, and breathed the air of every clime I am familiar with the city and the wilderness, the civilized man and the savage. If I have taught myself to hate, shun, and despise humanity, it is because I know it well

"Once, during my wanderings, I visited the home of my boyhood. Unseen and unknown, I trod familiar ground, and gazed

on familiar though time-worn faces. I stood at the window of Mr. Graham's library; saw the contented, happy countenance of Emily—happy in her blindness and her forgetfulness of the past. A young girl sat near the fire, endeavouring to read by its flickering light. I knew not then what gave such a charm to her thoughtful features, nor why my eyes dwelt upon them with a rare pleasure; for there was no voice to proclaim to the father's heart that he looked on the face of his child. I am not sure that the strong impulse which prompted me then to enter, acknowledge my identity, and beg Emily to speak to me a word of forgiveness, might not have prevailed over the dread of her displeasure; but Mr. Graham at the moment made his appearance, cold and implacable as ever. I looked upon him an instant, then fled from the house, and the next day departed for other lands.

"Although in the various labours which I was compelled to undertake to earn for myself a decent maintenance, I had more than once met with such success as to give me temporary independence, and to enable me to indulge myself in expensive travelling, I had never amassed a fortune; indeed, I had not cared to do so, since I had no use for money, except to employ it in the gratification of my immediate wants. Accident, however, at last thrust upon me a wealth which I could scarcely be said to have sought

"After a year spent in the wilderness of the West, I found myself in that land which has recently been termed the Land of Promise, but which has proved to many a greedy emigrant a land of falsehood and deceit For me, however, who sought it not, it showered gold. I was among the earliest discoverers of its treasure-vaults Nor was it merely at the mines that fortune favoured me. With the first results of my labours I chanced to purchase an immense tract of land, little dreaming at the time that those desert acres were destined to become the streets and squares of a great and prosperous city.

"So it was, however, and without effort, almost without my own knowledge, I achieved the greatness which springs from untold wealth

"But this was not all. The blessed accident which led me to this golden land was the means of disclosing a pearl of price.

"One day a miserable, half-starved, and apparently dying man crept to the door of my tent, and asked in a feeble voice for charity. I did not refuse to admit him into my narrow domicile, and to the extent of my ability relieved his suffering condition.

He proved to be the victim of want rather than disease, and, his hunger appeased, the savage brutality of his coarse nature soon manifested itself in the dogged indifference with which he received a stranger's bounty, and the gross ingratitude with which he abused my hospitality. A few days served to restore him to his strength; and then, anxious to dismiss my visitor, whose conduct had already excited suspicions of his good faith, I gave him warning that he must depart.

"He begged permission to remain until the next morning, as the night was near, and he had no shelter provided To this I made no objection, little imagining how base a serpent I was harbouring. At midnight I was awakened from my sleep to find my lodger busily engaged in rifling my property, and preparing to take an unceremonious leave of my dwelling. Nor did his villainy end here. Upon my seizing and charging him with the theft, he snatched a weapon which lay near at hand, and attempted my life I succeeded, however, in subduing and mastering my desperate antagonist. He now crouched at my feet in abject submission. I should probably have handed the traitor over to summary justice; but, ere I had time to do so, he by chance held out to my cupidity a bribe so tempting, that I forgot the deserving of my knavish guest in the eagerness with which I bartered his freedom as the price of its possession

"He freely emptied his pockets at my bidding and restored to me the gold, for the loss of which I never should have repined. As the base metal rolled at my feet, however, there glittered among the coins a jewel which filled me with greater surprise than if it had been a new-fallen star.

"It was a ring of peculiar design and workmanship, which had once been the property of my father, and after his death had been worn by my mother until the time of her marriage with Mr. Graham, when it was transferred to myself. This ring, with a watch and some other trinkets, had been left in the possession of Lucy when I parted with her at Rio, and the sight of it seemed to me like a voice from the grave I eagerly sought to learn from my prisoner the source whence it had been obtained, but he maintained an obstinate silence At length, however, the promise of instant permission to depart, 'unwhipped by justice', at the conclusion of his tale, wrung from him a secret fraught to me with vital interest.

"This man was Stephen Grant, the son of my old friend Ben. He had heard from his father's lips the story of your mother's misfortunes; and the circumstance of a violent quarrel

which arose between Ben and his vixen wife at the young stranger's introduction to their household impressed the tale upon his recollection. From his account it appeared that my long-continued absence from Lucy, during the time of my illness, was construed by her honest but distrustful counsellor and friend into cruel desertion. The poor girl began soon to feel convinced of the correctness of the old sailor's suspicions and fears. She had already applied to my employer for information concerning me, but he, fully believing me to be among the dead, forbore to distress her by a communication of his belief, and replied to her questioning with an obscurity which served to give new force to her hitherto vague surmises. She positively refused, however, to leave our home; and, clinging to the hope of my final return thither, remained where I had left her until the terrible fever began its ravages Her small stock of money was by this time consumed, her strength both of mind and body gave way; and Ben, becoming every day more confident that the simple-hearted Lucy had been betrayed and forsaken, persuaded her at last to sell her furniture, and with the sum thus raised flee the infected country before it should be too late She sailed for Boston in the same vessel in which Ben shipped before the mast, and on reaching that port her humble protector took her to the only home he had to offer.

"There your mother's sad fate found a mournful termination; and you, her infant child, were left to the mercy of the cruel woman who, but for her consciousness of guilt and her fear of its betrayal, would doubtless have thrust you at once from the miserable shelter her dwelling afforded. This guilt consisted in a foul robbery committed by Nan and her already infamous son upon your innocent and hapless mother, now rendered, through her feebleness, an easy prey to their rapacity. The fruits of this vile theft, however, were never participated in by Nan, whose promising son so far exceeded her in duplicity and craft that, having obtained possession of the jewels for the alleged purpose of bartering them away, he reserved such as he thought proper, and appropriated to his own use the proceeds of the remainder.

"The antique ring which I now hold in my possession, the priceless relic of a mournful tragedy, would have shared the fate of the rest, but for its apparent worthlessness. Notwithstanding the information thus gained, and the exciting idea to which it gave rise, that my child might be still living and finally restored to me, I could not yet feel any security that these daring hopes were not destined to be crushed in their infancy, and that my newly found

treasure might not again elude my eager search. To my enquiries concerning you, Gertrude, Stephen, who had no longer any motives for concealing the truth, declared his inability to acquaint me with any particulars of a later period than the time of your residence with Trueman Flint.

"Further than this I could learn nothing; but it was enough to inspire all my energies and fill me with one desire only—the recovery of my child I hastened to Boston, had no difficulty in tracing your benefactor, and, though he had been long since dead, found many a truthful witness to his well-known virtues. Nor, when I asked for his adopted child, did I find her forgotten in the quarter of the city where she had passed her childhood, and where, having experienced the trials of poverty, she made it both the duty and the pleasure of her prosperity to administer to the wants of a neighbourhood whose sufferings she had aforetime both witnessed and shared.

"But alas! to complete the sum of sad vicissitudes with which my unhappy destiny was already crowded, at the very moment when I was assured of my daughter's safety, and my ears were drinking in the sweet praises that accompanied the mention of her name, there fell upon me like a thunderbolt the startling words, 'She is now the adopted child of Emily Graham, the blind girl'.

"O, strange coincidence! O, righteous retribution! which, at the very moment when I was picturing to myself the consummation of my cherished hopes, crushed me once more beneath a destiny that would not be cheated of its victim!

"My child, my only child, bound by the gratitude and love of years to one in whose face I scarcely dared to look, lest my soul should be withered by the expression of condemnation which the consciousness of my presence would inspire!

"The seas and lands which had hitherto divided us seemed not to my tortured fancy so insurmountable a barrier between myself and my long-lost daughter, as the dreadful reflection that the only earthly being whose love I had hoped in time to win had been reared from her infancy in a household where my very name was a thing abhorred.

"Stung to the quick by the harrowing thought that all my prayers, entreaties, and explanations could never undo her early impressions, and that all my labours and all my love could never call forth other than a cold and formal recognition of my claims, or, worse still, a feigned, hypocritical pretence of filial affection, I half resolved to leave my child in ignorance of her birth, and never seek to look upon her face, rather than subject her to the terrible necessity of choosing between the friend whom she loved and the

father from whose crimes she had learned to shrink with horror and dread.

"I directed my steps to the well-remembered counting-house, and here learned from a clerk that the whole household, including yourself, had been passing the winter in Paris, and were at present at a German watering-place Without hesitation, or further enquiry, I took the steamer to Liverpool, and from thence hastened to Baden-Baden.

"I took an early opportunity to obtain an introduction to Mrs. Graham, and, thanks to her unreserved conversation, made myself master of the fact that Emily and yourself were left in Boston, and were at that time under the care of Dr. Jeremy.

"It was on my return voyage, which was immediately undertaken, that I made the acquaintance of Dr. Gryseworth and his daughter.

"Once more arrived in Boston, I learned that Dr. Jeremy had left that very morning for New York, and would not be back for two or three weeks

"Nothing could have been more favourable to my wishes than the chance thus afforded of overtaking your party and, in the character of a travelling companion, introducing myself gradually to your notice. You know how this purpose was effected; how, now in the rear, and now in advance, I nevertheless maintained a constant proximity to your footsteps.

"For much of the freedom with which I approached you, and made myself an occasional member of your circle, I was indebted to Emily's blindness; for I could not doubt that otherwise time and its changes would fail to conceal from her my identity, and I should meet with a premature recognition. Nor, until the final act of the drama, when death stared us all in the face, and concealment became impossible, did I trust my voice to her hearing.

"How closely, during those few weeks, I watched and weighed your every word and action, seeking even to read your thoughts in your face, none can tell whose acuteness is not sharpened and vivified by motives so all-engrossing as mine; and who can measure the anguish of the fond father who, day by day, learned to worship his child with a more absorbing idolatry, and yet dared not clasp her to his heart?

"Especially when I saw you the victim of grief and trouble did I long to assert a claim to your confidence, and more than once my self-control would have given way but for the dread inspired by the gentle Emily—gentle to all but me.

I could not brook the thought that with my confession I should cease to be the trusted friend, and become the abhorred parent

"And so I kept silent; and, sometimes present to your sight, but still oftener hid from view, I hovered around your path until that dreadful day, which you will long remember, when, everything forgotten but the safety of yourself and Emily, my heart spoke out and betrayed my secret.—And now you know all—my follies, misfortunes, sufferings, and sins!

"Can you love me, Gertrude? It is all I ask I seek not to steal you from your present home—to rob poor Emily of a child whom she values perhaps as much as I. The only balm my wounded spirit seeks is the guileless confession that you will at least *try* to love your father.

"I have no hope in this world, and none, alas! beyond, but in yourself. Could you feel my heart now beating against its prison-bars, you would realize, as I do, that unless soothed it will burst ere long Will you sooth it by your pity, my sweet, my darling child? Will you bless it by your love? If so, come, clasp your arms around me, and whisper to me words of peace Within sight of your window, in the old summer-house at the end of the garden, I wait, listening for your footsteps."

CHAPTER XLVI

THE REUNION

As Gertrude's eyes, after greedily devouring the manuscript, fall upon its closing words, she springs to her feet, and the next instant her little room (the floor strewed with the scattered sheets which had dropped from her lap as she rose) is left vacant She has flown down the staircase, escaped through the hall-door, and bounding over a lawn at the back of the house, now wet with the evening dew, she approaches the summer-house, from the opposite entrance to that at which Mr Amory is watching for her coming So noiseless is her light step, that before he is conscious of her presence she has thrown herself upon his bosom, and, her whole frame trembling with the vehemence of long-suppressed and now uncontrolled agitation, she bursts into a torrent of passionate tears, in-

terrupted only by frequent sobs, so deep and so exhausting, that her father, with his arms folded tightly around her, and clasping her so closely to his heart that she feels its irregular beating, endeavours to still the tempest of her grief, whispering softly, as to an infant, "Hush! hush, my child! you frighten me!"

And, gradually soothed by his gentle caresses, her excitement subsides, and she is able to lift her face to his, and smile upon him through her tears. They stand thus for many minutes, in a silence that speaks far more than words. Wrapped in the folds of his heavy cloak to preserve her from the evening air, and still encircled in his strong embrace, Gertrude feels that their union of spirit is not less complete, while the long-banished man, who for years has never felt the sweet influence of a kindly smile, glows with a melting tenderness which hardening solitude has not the power to subdue

Again and again the moon retires behind a cloud, and peeps out to find them still in the attitude in which she saw them last At length, as she gains a broad and open expanse, and looks clearly down, Mr Amory, lifting his daughter's face and gazing into her glistening eyes, while he gently strokes the disordered hair from her forehead, asks, in an accent of touching appeal, "You will love me, then?"

"O, I do! I do!" exclaims Gertrude, sealing his lips with kisses

His hitherto unmoved countenance relaxes at this fervent assurance. He bows his head upon his shoulder, and the strong man weeps.

Not long, however. Her self-possession all restored at seeing him thus overcome, Gertrude places her hand in his, and startles him from his position by the firm and decided tone with which she whispers, "Come!"

"Whither?" exclaims he, looking up in surprise.

"To Emily"

With a half shudder, and a mournful shake of the head, he retreats instead of advancing in the direction in which she would lead him—"I cannot"

"But she waits for you; she, too, weeps and longs and prays for your coming"

"Emily! You know not what you are saying, my child!"

"Indeed, indeed, my father, it is you who are deceived. Emily does not hate you, she never did She believed you dead long ago; but your voice, though heard but once, has half robbed her of her reason, so wholly, so entirely does she love

you still. Come, and she will tell you, better than I can, what a wretched mistake has made martyrs of you both."

Emily, who had heard the voice of Willie Sullivan as he bade Gertrude farewell on the doorstep, and rightly conjectured that it was he, forbore making any enquiries for the absent girl at the tea-table, and, thinking it probable that she preferred to remain undisturbed, retired to the sitting-room at the conclusion of the meal, where (as Mr. Graham sought the library) she remained alone for more than an hour.

Emily had by chance chosen such a position opposite to the cheerful fire, that its flickering light played about her face, and brought to view the rich and unwonted bloom which inward excitement had called up in her usually pale countenance. The exquisite and refined taste which always made Emily's dress an index to the soft purity of her character, was never more strikingly developed than when she wore, as on the present occasion, a flowing robe of white cashmere, fastened at the waist with a silken girdle, and with full drapery sleeves, whose lining and border of snowy silk could only have been rivalled by the delicate hand and wrist which had escaped from beneath their folds, and somewhat nervously played with the heavy crimson fringe of a shawl, worn in the chilly dining-room, and now thrown carelessly over the arm of the sofa

Supporting herself upon her elbow, she sat with her head bent forward, and as she watched the images reflected in the glass of memory, one who knew her not, and was unaware of her want of sight, might have believed that, looking forth from her long drooping eyelashes, she was tracing imaginary forms among the embers, so intently was her face bent in that direction

At length a low, quick bark from the house dog once more attracted her attention, and in a moment steps were heard crossing the piazza

Before they had gained the door Emily was standing upright, straining her ear to catch the sound of every footfall, and when Gertrude and Mr. Amory entered, she looked more like a statue than a living figure, as with clasped hands, parted lips, and one foot slightly advanced, she silently awaited their approach

One glance at Emily's face, another at that of her agitated father, and Gertrude was gone She saw the completeness of their mutual recognition, and with instinctive delicacy forbore to mar by her presence the sacredness of so holy an interview.

As the door closed upon her retreating figure Emily parted her clasped hands, stretched them forth into the dim vacancy, and murmured, "Philip!"

He seized them between both of his, and with one step forward fell upon his knees. As he did so, the half-fainting girl dropped upon the seat behind her. Mr. Amory bowed his head upon the hands which, still held tightly between his own, now rested on her lap, and, hiding his face upon her slender fingers, uttered her name.

"The grave has given up its dead!" exclaimed Emily, and extricating her hands from his convulsive grasp, she flung her arms round his neck, rested her head upon his bosom, and whispered, in a voice half choked with emotion, "Philip, dear Philip, am I dreaming, or have you come back again?"

The conventional rules, the enforced restrictions, which often set limits to the outbursts of natural feeling, had no existence for one so wholly the child of nature as Emily. She and Philip had loved each other in their childhood; before that childhood was fully past they had parted; and as children they met again. Not until seated beside each other, with their hands still clasped, Philip had heard from Emily's lips the history of her hopes, her fears, her prayers, and her despair; and she, while listening to the sad incidents of his life, had dropped upon the hand she held many a kiss and tear of sympathy, did either fully realize the mercy so long delayed, so fully accorded now, which promised even on earth to crown their days

Emily wept at the tale of Lucy's trials and her early death, and when she learned that it was her and Philip's child whom see had taken to her heart, and fostered with the truest affection, she sent up a silent prayer of gratitude that it had been allotted to her apparently bereaved and darkened destiny to fulfil so blessed a mission.

"If I could love her more, dear Philip," exclaimed she, while the tears trickled down her cheeks, "I would do so for your sake, and that of her sweet, innocent, suffering mother"

"And you forgive me, then, Emily?" said Philip, as, both having finished their sad recitals of the past, they gave themselves up to the sweet reflection of their present joy.

"Forgive?—O, Philip! what have I to forgive? Let us forget the sad events of the past, and trust that the loving hand which has thus far shaped our course has but afflicted us in mercy"

"In mercy!" exclaimed Philip. "What mercy does my past

experience give evidence of, or your life of everlasting darkness? Can you believe it a loving hand which made me the ill-fated instrument, and you a lifelong sufferer, from one of the dreariest misfortunes that can afflict humanity?"

"Speak not of my blindness as a misfortune," answered Emily. "I have long ceased to think it such. It is only through the darkness of the night that we discern the lights of heaven, and only when shut out from earth that we enter the gates of Paradise With eyes to see the wonderful working of nature and nature's God, I nevertheless closed them to the evidences of Almighty love that were around me on every side. While enjoying the beautiful and glorious gifts that were showered on my pathway, I forgot to thank and praise the Giver"

As Emily finished speaking, and Philip, gazing with awe upon the rapt expression of her soul-illumined face, beheld the triumph of an immortal mind, and pondered on the might, the majesty, and power of the influence wrought by simple piety, the door of the room opened abruptly, and Mr. Graham entered.

The sound of the well-known footstep disturbed the soaring thoughts of both, and the flush of excitement which had mounted into Emily's cheeks subsided into more than her wonted paleness, as Philip, rising slowly and deliberately from his seat at her side, stood face to face with her father.

Mr. Graham approached with the puzzled and scrutinizing air of one who finds himself called upon in the character of a host to greet a visitor who, though an apparent stranger, may possibly have claims to recognition, and glanced at his daughter as if hoping she would relieve the awkwardness by an introduction. But the agitated Emily maintained perfect silence, and every feature of Philip's countenance remained immovable as Mr. Graham slowly came forward.

He had advanced within one step of the spot where Philip stood waiting to receive him, when, struck by the stern look and attitude of the latter, he stopped short, gazed one moment into the eagle eyes of his stepson, then staggered, grasped at the mantelpiece, and would have fallen, but Philip, starting forward, helped him to his armchair, which stood opposite to the sofa.

And yet no word was spoken. At length Mr Graham, who, having fallen into the seat, sat gazing into the face of Mr. Amory, ejaculated in a tone of wondering excitement, "Philip Amory?"

"Yes, father," exclaimed Emily, suddenly rising and grasping

her father's arm, "it is Philip; he, whom we have so long believed dead, restored to us in health and safety!"

Mr. Graham rose from his chair, and, leaning heavily on Emily's shoulder, again approached Mr. Amory, who stood fixed as marble. His step tottered, and the hand which he extended to Philip was marked by an unusual tremulousness But Philip did not offer to receive the proffered hand, or reply by word to his salutation.

Mr. Graham turned towards Emily, and exclaimed half bitterly, half sadly, "I cannot blame him! God knows I wronged the boy!"

"Wronged him!" cried Philip. "Yes, wronged him, indeed! Blighted his life and blasted his reputation!"

"No," exclaimed Mr. Graham; "not that, Philip!—not that! I discovered my error before I had doomed you to infamy in the eyes of one of your fellow-men"

"You acknowledge, then, the error?"

"I do! I imputed to you the deed which proved to have been accomplished through the agency of my most confidential clerk. I was unjust, Philip, I grant; but I had some cause—I had some cause"

"Perhaps so," responded Philip; "I am willing to grant that"

"Let us shake hands upon it, then," said Mr. Graham, "and endeavour to forget the past"

Philip did not again refuse to accede to this request, though there was but little warmth in the manner of his compliance

Mr Graham, seeming now to think the matter ended, looked relieved, and as if he had shaken off a burden which had been weighing upon his conscience for years, and, subsiding into his armchair, begged to learn the particulars of Philip's experience during the last twenty years

The outline of the story was soon told, Mr. Graham listening to it with attention, and enquiring into its particulars with an interest which proved that his feelings had sensibly softened towards the stepson, with every memory of whom there had come to his heart a pang of self-reproach

Notwithstanding the many strange and romantic incidents which were unfolding themselves, none seemed to produce so great an impression upon Mr. Graham's mind as the singular circumstance that the child who had been reared under his roof, and endeared herself to him, should prove to be Philip's daughter. As he left the room at the conclusion of the tale,

he muttered to himself more than once, "Very singular! Very!"

Hardly had he departed before another door was timidly opened, and Gertrude looked cautiously in. Her father went quickly towards her, and, passing his arm round her waist, drew her towards Emily, and clasped them both in a long and silent embrace

"Philip," exclaimed Emily, "can you still doubt the mercy and love which have spared us for such a meeting?"

"O, Emily!" replied he, "I am deeply grateful. Teach me how and where to bestow my tribute of praise"

On the hour of sweet communion which succeeded we forbear to dwell—the silent rapture of Emily, the passionately expressed joy of Philip, or the trusting, loving glances which Gertrude cast upon both.

It was nearly midnight when Mr. Amory rose, and announced his intention to depart. Emily, who had not thought of his leaving the spot which she hoped he would now consider his home, entreated him to remain, and Gertrude, with her eyes, joined in the eager petition But he persisted in his resolution with a firmness and seriousness which proved how vain would be the attempt to shake it "Philip," said Emily at length, laying her hand upon his arm, "you have not yet forgiven my father."

She had divined his thoughts He shrank under her reproachful tones, and made no answer. "But you *will*, dear Philip—you *will*," continued she, in a pleading voice

He hesitated, then glanced at her once more, and replied, "I will, dearest Emily, I will—in time."

CHAPTER XLVII

THE RECOMPENSE

When Uncle True died, Mr Cooper reverently buried his old friend in the ancient graveyard which adjoined the church where he had long officiated as sexton But long before the adjacent and time-worn building gave place to a modern and more imposing structure, the hallowed remains of Uncle True had found a quieter resting-place in a beautiful piece

of undulating woodland, in the neighbourhood of Mr. Graham's country residence, which had been consecrated as a cemetery.

The same plot of land, which had been purchased through Willie's thoughtful liberality, and by Gertrude made fragrant and beautiful with summer rose and winter ivy, now inclosed also the forms of Mr. Cooper and Mrs. Sullivan; and over these three graves Gertrude had planted many a flower, and watered it with her tears. Especially did she view it as a sacred duty to mark the anniversary of the death of each by a tribute of fresh garlands; and, with this pious purpose in view, she left Mr. Graham's house one beautiful afternoon, about a week after the events took place which are narrated in the previous chapter.

She carried on her arm a basket, which contained her offering of flowers; and as she had a long walk before her, started at a rapid pace

She had left her father with Emily. Now and then, as she dwelt in her musings upon the sweet tie between herself and the latter, which had gained strength with every succeeding year, and the equally close and kindred union between father and child, which, though recent in its origin, was scarcely capable of being more firmly cemented by time, her thoughts would, in spite of herself, wander to that earlier-formed and not less tender friendship, now, alas! sadly ruptured and wounded, if not wholly uprooted and destroyed She tried to banish the remembrance of Willie's faithlessness and desertion. But it would not do The obtruding and painful recollection presented itself continually, notwithstanding her utmost efforts to repress it

She had received two visits from Willie since the one already mentioned; but the second meeting had been in its character very similar to the first, and on the succeeding occasion the constraint had increased instead of diminishing. Several times Willie had made an apparent effort to break through this unnatural barrier, and speak and act with the freedom of former days; but a sudden blush, or sign of confusion and distress, on Gertrude's part, deterred him from any further attempt to put to flight the reserve and want of confidence which subsisted in their intercourse.

As Gertrude pondered over the awkward and distressing results of every visit he had made her, she half hoped he would discontinue them altogether, believing that the feelings of both would be less wounded by a total separation than

by interviews which must leave on the mind of each a still greater sense of estrangement

Strange as it may seem, she had not yet acquainted him with the event so deep in its interest to herself—the discovery of her dearly loved father Once she tried to speak of it, but found herself so overcome at the very idea of imparting to the confidant of her childhood an experience of which she could scarcely yet think without emotion, that she paused in the attempt, fearing that, should she on any topic give way to her sensibilities, she should lose all restraint, and lay open her whole heart to Willie.

Wholly occupied with these and similar musings, Gertrude walked on with a pace of whose quickness she was scarcely herself aware, and soon gained the shelter of the heavy pines which bordered the entrance to the cemetery. Here she paused for a moment to enjoy the refreshing breeze that played beneath the branches, and then, passing through the gateway, entered a carriage road at the right, and proceeded slowly up the gradual ascent.

After a while she left the broad road which she had been following, and turned into a little bypath This she pursued for some distance, and then gained the shady and retired spot which, partly from its remoteness from the public walks, and partly from its own natural beauty, had attracted her attention and recommended itself to her choice It was situated on the slope of a little hill; a huge rock protected it on one side from the observation of the passer-by, and a fine old oak overshadowed it upon the other. Upon a jutting piece of stone beside the grave of Uncle True Gertrude seated herself, as was her wont, and, lifting the cover of her basket, emptied her flowers upon the grass, and with skilful fingers commenced weaving a graceful chaplet, which, when completed, she placed upon the grave at her feet Then with the remainder of the blossoms she strewed the other mounds

It was seven years that day since Uncle True died, but the time had not yet come for Gertrude to forget the simple, kind old man As she gazed upon the grassy mound that covered him, and scene after scene rose up before her in which that earliest friend and herself had whiled away the happy hours, there came the recollection of that third and seldom absent one, who completed and made perfect the memory of their fireside joys, and Gertrude, while yielding to the inward reflection, unconsciously exclaimed aloud, "O, Uncle True, you and I are not parted yet, but Willie is not of us!"

"O, Gertrude," said a reproachful voice close at her side, "is Willie to blame for that?"

She started, turned, saw the object of her thoughts with his mild, sad eye fixed enquiringly upon her, and, without replying to his question, buried her face in her hands

He threw himself upon the ground at her feet, and, as on the occasion of their first childish interview, gently lifted her bowed head from the hands upon which it had fallen, and compelled her to look him in the face, saying, at the same time, in the most imploring accents, "Tell me, Gerty, in pity tell me, why am I excluded from your sympathy?"

But still she made no reply, except by the tears that coursed down her cheeks.

"You make me miserable," continued he vehemently. "What have I done, that you have so shut me out of your affection? Why do you look so coldly upon me, and even shrink from my sight?" added he as Gertrude, unable to endure his steadfast, searching look, turned her eyes in another direction, and strove to free her hands from his grasp.

"I am not cold—I do not mean to be," said she, her voice half choked with emotion.

"O, Gertrude," replied he, relinquishing her hands and turning away, "I see you have wholly ceased to love me I trembled when I first beheld you, so lovely, so beautiful, and so beloved by all, and feared lest some fortunate rival had stolen your heart from its boyish keeper. But even then I did not deem that you would refuse me at least a *brother's* claim to your affection"

"I will not," exclaimed Gertrude eagerly. "O, Willie, you must not be angry with me! Let me be your sister!"

He smiled a most mournful smile "I was right, then," continued he; "you feared lest I should claim too much, and discouraged my presumption by awarding me nothing Be it so Perhaps your prudence was for the best; but O, Gertrude, it has made me heartbroken."

"Willie," exclaimed Gertrude, with excitement, "do you know how strangely you are speaking?"

"Strangely?" responded Willie, in a half-offended tone "Is it so strange that I should love you? Have I not for years cherished the remembrance of our past affection, and looked forward to our reunion as my only hope of happiness? Has not this fond expectation inspired my labours, and cheered my toils, and endeared to me my life, in spite of its bereavements? And can you, in the very sight of these mounds, beneath which

lie all else I held dear on earth, crush and destroy without compassion this solitary but all-engrossing——?"

"Willie," interrupted Gertrude, her calmness suddenly restored, and speaking in a kind but serious tone, "is it honourable for you to address me thus? Have you forgotten——?"

"No, I have *not* forgotten," exclaimed he vehemently. "I have not forgotten that I have no right to distress or annoy you, and I will do so no more But O, Gerty! my sister Gerty, blame me not, and wonder not, if I fail at present to perform a brother's part. I cannot stay in this neighbourhood. I cannot be the patient witness of another's happiness My services, my time, my life, you may command, and in my far-distant home I will never cease to pray that the husband you have chosen, whoever he be, may prove himself worthy of my noble Gertrude, and love her one half as well as I do!"

"Willie," said Gertrude, "what madness is this? I am bound by no such tie as you describe, but what shall I think of your treachery to Isabel?"

"To Isabel?" cried Willie, starting up, as if seized with a new idea; "and has that silly rumour reached *you* too? and did you put faith in the falsehood?"

"Falsehood!" exclaimed Gertrude, lifting her hitherto drooping eyelids and casting upon him, through their wet lashes, a look of earnest scrutiny

Willie responded unhesitatingly, with a tone of astonishment not unmingled with reproach, "Falsehood?—Yes With the knowledge you have both of her and myself, could you doubt its being such for a moment?"

"O, Willie!" cried Gertrude, "could I doubt the evidence of my own eyes and ears? Had I trusted to less faithful witnesses I might have been deceived Do not attempt to conceal from me the truth, to which my own observation can testify Treat me with frankness, Willie!—Indeed, I deserve it at your hands"

"Frankness, Gertrude! It is you only who are mysterious. Could I lay my whole soul bare to your gaze, you would be convinced of its truth, its perfect truth, to its first affection And as to Isabel Clinton, if it is to her that you have reference, your eyes and your ears have both played you false, if——"

"O, Willie! Willie!" exclaimed Gertrude, interrupting him, "have you so soon forgotten your devotion to the belle of Saratoga, your unwillingness to sanction her temporary absence

from your sight; the pain which the mere suggestion of the journey caused you, and the fond impatience which threatened to render those few days an eternity?"

"Stop! stop!" cried Willie, a new light breaking in upon him, "and tell me where you learned all this?"

"In the very spot where you spoke and acted. Mr. Graham's parlour did not witness our first meeting. In the public promenade ground, on the shore of Saratoga lake, and on board the steamboat at Albany, did I both see and recognize you—myself unknown. There, too, did your own words serve to convince me of the truth of that which from other lips I had refused to believe."

The sunshine which gilds the morning is scarcely more bright and gladsome than the glow of rekindled hope which animated the face of Willie.—"Listen to me, Gertrude," said he, in an almost solemn tone, "and believe that, in sight of my mother's grave, I speak with such sincerity and candour as are fitting for the ears of angels. I do not question the accuracy with which you overheard my expostulations and entreaties on the subject of Miss Clinton's proposed journey, or the impatience I expressed at parting for her speedy return.

"I did indeed feel pain at Miss Clinton's sudden departure for New York, under a pretext which ought not to have weighed with her for a moment. I did indeed employ every argument to dissuade her from her purpose, and when my eloquence had failed to induce the abandonment of the scheme, I availed myself of every suggestion and motive which possibly might influence her to shorten her absence. Not because the society of the selfish girl was essential, or even conducive, to my own happiness—far from it—but because her excellent father, who so worshipped and idolized his only child that he would have thought no sacrifice too great by means of which he could add one particle to her enjoyment, was, at that very time, hovering between life and death, and I was disgusted at the heartlessness which voluntarily left the fondest of parents deprived of all female tending, to the charge of a hired nurse, and an unskilful though willing youth like myself. If selfishness mingled at all in my views, dear Gerty, and made me over-impatient for the return of the daughter to her post of duty, it was that I might be released from almost constant attendance upon my invalid friend, and hasten to her from whom I hoped such warmth of greeting as I was only eager to bestow. Can you wonder, then, that your reception struck cold upon my throbbing heart?"

"But you understand the cause of that coldness now?" said Gertrude, looking up at him through a rain of tears "You know now why I dared not let my heart speak out?"

"And this was all, then?" cried Willie "And you are free, and I may love you still?"

"Free from all bonds, dear Willie, but those which you yourself clasped around me, and which have encircled me from my childhood"

And now, with heart pressed to heart, they pour in each other's ear the tale of a mutual affection, planted in infancy, nourished in youth, fostered and strengthened amid separation and absence, and perfected through trial, to bless and sanctify every year of their after-life.

CHAPTER XLVIII

ANCHORS FOR WORLD-TRIED SOULS

The sun was casting long shadows, and the sunset hour was near, when Gertrude and Willie rose to depart They left the cemetery by a different gateway, and in the opposite direction to that by which Gertrude had entered, where Willie found the chaise in which he had come

As soon as they came in sight of the house, Gertrude, familiar with the customary ways of the family, perceived that something unusual was going forward Lamps were moving about in every direction, the front door stood wide open; there was, what she had never seen before, the blaze of a bright fire discernible through the windows of the best chamber; and, as they drew still nearer, she observed that the piazza was half covered with trunks

All these appearances, as she rightly conjectured, betokened the arrival of Mrs Graham, and possibly of other company. She might, perhaps, have regretted the ill-timed coming of this bustling lady at the very moment when she was eager for a quiet opportunity to present Willie to Emily and her father, and communicate to them her own happiness, but, if such a thought presented itself, it vanished in a moment

"Let us drive up the avenue, Willie," said she, "to the side-door, so that George may see us, and take your horse to the stable"

that evening The weather was mild, but a light fire, which had been kindled on Mr Clinton's account, did not render the room too warm It had, however, driven the young people into a remote corner, leaving the neighbourhood of the fireplace to Mrs. Graham and Emily, who occupied the sofa, and Mr. Clinton and Mr Graham, whose armchairs were placed on the opposite side

This arrangement enabled Mr Graham to converse freely and uninterruptedly with his guest upon some grave topic of interest, while his talkative wife entertained herself and Emily by a recapitulation of her travels and adventures On a table, at the farther extremity of the room, was placed a huge portfolio of beautiful engravings, recently purchased and brought home by Mr. Graham, and representing a series of European views Gertrude and Kitty were turning them carefully over, and Fanny, who was leaning over Gertrude's shoulder, was listening eagerly to the young ladies' explanations and comments

Occasionally Isabel, the only restless or unoccupied person present, would lean over the table to glance at the likeness of some familiar spot, and exclaim, "Kitty, there's the shop where I bought my blue silk!" or, "Kitty, there's the waterfall that we visited in company with the Russian officers" While the assembled company were thus occupied, the door opened, and, without any announcement, Mr. Amory and William Sullivan entered

Had either made his appearance singly, he would have been looked upon with astonishment by the majority of the company, but coming as they did together, and with an apparently good understanding existing between them, there was no countenance present which expressed any emotion but that of utter surprise

Mr and Mrs Graham, however, were too much accustomed to society to betray any further evidence of that sentiment than was contained in a momentary glance, and, rising, received their visitors with due politeness and propriety The former nodded carelessly to Mr Amory, whom he had seen in the morning, presented him to Mr Clinton (without, however, mentioning the existing connection with himself), and was preparing to go through the same ceremony to Mrs Graham, but was saved the trouble, as she had not forgotten the acquaintance formed at Baden-Baden

Willie's knowledge of the company also spared the necessity of introduction to all but Emily, and that being accidentally omitted,

he gave an arch glance at Gertrude, and, taking an offered seat near Isabel, entered into conversation with her, Mr. Amory being in like manner engrossed by Mrs Graham.

"Miss Gertrude," whispered Fanny, as soon as the interrupted composure of the party was once more restored, and glancing at Willie as she spoke, "that's the gentleman you were out driving with this afternoon Is it Willie, Gertrude?—is it Mr. Sullivan?"

Gertrude became more and more embarrassed, while the mischievous Fanny continued to ply her with questions; and Isabel, who had jealously noticed that Willie's eyes wandered more than once to the table, turned on her such a look as rendered her confusion distressing.

Accident came to her relief, however. The maid, with the evening paper, endeavoured to open the door, against which her chair was placed, thus giving her an opportunity to rise and receive the paper. While she was thus engaged, Mr. Clinton addressed a question in a low voice to Willie, and receiving an affirmatory reply, took Isabel by the hand, and approaching Mr Amory, exclaimed with deep emotion, "Sir, Mr. Sullivan tells me you are the person who saved the life of my daughter, and here she is to thank you."

Mr. Amory rose and flung his arm over the shoulder and around the waist of Gertrude, who was passing on her way to hand the newspaper to Mr. Graham, and who, not having heard the remark of Mr. Clinton, received the caress with a sweet smile and an upturned face "Here," said he, "Mr Clinton, is the person who saved the life of your daughter. It is true that I swam with her to the shore, but it was under the mistaken impression that I was bearing to a place of safety my own darling child."

"Just like you, Gertrude! Just like you!" shouted Kitty and Fanny in a breath

"My own noble Gertrude!" whispered Emily, as, leaning on Mr. Amory's arm, she pressed Gertrude's hands to her lips

"O, Gertrude!" exclaimed Isabel, with tears in her eyes, "I didn't know. I never thought——"

"Your child?" cried Mrs Graham's loud voice, interrupting Isabel's unfinished exclamation

"Yes, my child, thank God!" said Mr. Amory reverently; "restored at last to her unworthy father, and—you have no secrets here, my darling?"—Gertrude shook her head, and glanced at Willie, who now stood at her side—"and gladly bestowed by him upon her faithful and far more deserving lover." And he placed her hand in Willie's.

There was a moment's pause. All were impressed with the solemnity of the action. Then Mr. Graham came forward, shook each of the young couple heartily by the hand, and, passing his sleeve hastily across his eyes, sought his customary refuge in the library

"*I* am glad," said Mr. Clinton, placing his hands upon those of Willie and Gertrude, which were still clasped together, "that the noble and self-sacrificing girl, whom I have no words to thank, and no power to repay, has reaped a worthy reward in the love of one of the few men with whom a fond father may venture to trust the happiness of his child"

Exhausted by so much excitement, Mr. Clinton now complained of sudden faintness, and was assisted to his room by Willie, who, after waiting to see him fully restored, returned to receive the blessing of Emily upon his new hopes, and hear with wonder and delight the circumstances which attended the discovery of Gertrude's parentage.

For although it was an appointment to meet Mr Amory which had summoned him back to Boston, and he had in the course of their interview acquainted him with the happy termination of a lover's doubts, he had not, until the disclosure took place in Mr. Graham's parlour, received in return the slightest hint of the great surprise which awaited him

And now, amid retrospections of the past, thanksgiving for the present, and hopes and aspirations for the future, the evening passed rapidly away.

. . . .

In a beautiful town about thirty miles from Boston, and on the shore of one of those hill-embosomed ponds which would be immortalized by the poet in a country less rich than ours with such sheets of blue transparent water, there stood a mansion-house of solid though ancient architecture. It had been the property of Philip Amory's paternal grandparents, and the early home and sole inheritance of his father, who so cherished the spot that it was only with great reluctance, and when driven to the act by the spur of poverty, that he was induced to part with the much-valued estate

To reclaim the venerable homestead, repair and judiciously modernize the house, and fertilize and adorn the grounds, was a favourite scheme with Philip. His ample means now rendering it practicable, he lost no time in putting it into execution, and the spring after he returned from his wanderings saw the work in a fair way to be speedily completed.

In the meantime, Gertrude's marriage had taken place; the Grahams had removed to their house in town, and the bustling mistress was already projecting changes in her husband's country seat.

And Emily, who had parted with her greatest treasure, and found herself in an atmosphere which was little in harmony with her spirit, murmured not, but, contented with her lot, neither dreamed of nor asked for outward change, until Philip came to her one day, and, taking her hand, said gently:

"This is no home for you, Emily. You are as much alone as I in my solitary farmhouse. We loved each other in childhood, our hearts became one in youth, and have continued so until now Why should we be longer parted? Your father will not oppose our wishes; and will you, dearest, refuse to bless and gladden the lonely life of your gray-haired lover?"

But Emily shook her head, while she answered, with her smile of ineffable sweetness

"Oh no, Philip, do not speak of it! Think of my frail health and my helplessness"

"Your health, dear Emily, is improving The roses are already coming back to your cheeks; and, for your helplessness, what task can be so sweet to me as teaching you, through my devotion, to forget? Oh, do not send me away disappointed, Emily! A cruel fate divided us for years, do not by your own act prolong that separation! Believe me, a union with my early love is my brightest, my only hope of happiness!"

And she did not withdraw the hand which he held, but yielded the other also to his fervent clasp

"My only thought had been, dear Philip," said she, "that ere this I should have been called to my Father's home, and even now I feel many a warning that I cannot be very long for earth, but while I stay, be it longer or shorter, it shall be as you wish. No word of mine shall part hearts so truly one, and your home shall be mine"

And when the grass turned green, and the flowers sent up their fragrance, and the birds sang in the branches, and the spring gales blew soft, and made a gentle ripple on the water, Emily came to live on the hillside with Philip

And is the long-wandering, much-suffering, and deeply-sorrowing exile happy now? He is; but his peace springs not from his beautiful home, his wide possessions, an honourable repute among his fellow-men, or even the love of the gentle Emily.

All these are blessings that he well knows how to prize; but his

world-tried soul has found a deeper anchor yet—a surer refuge from the tempest and the storm; for, through the power of a living faith, he has laid hold on eternal life The blind girl's prayers are answered; her last, best work is done, she has cast a ray from her blessed spirit into his darkened soul, and, should her call to depart soon come, she will leave behind one to follow in her footsteps, fulfil her charities, and do good on earth, until such time as he be summoned to join her again in heaven.

[*Continued over*

Kingston, W. H G.	The Three Midshipmen
Kingston, W H G	Manco
Kingston, W. H G	Peter the Whaler
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Mac Donald, George	At the Back of the North Wind
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Marryat, Captain	Masterman Ready
Marryat, Captain	Poor Jack
Marryat, Captain	The Settlers in Canada
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Melville, Herman	Typee, a Romance of the South Seas
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Mitford, Mary Russell	Country Sketches
Mulholland, Rosa	Hetty Gray
Parley, Peter	Tales about Greece and Rome
Reid, Captain Mayne	The Rifle Rangers
Schmid, Christoph von	The Basket of Flowers
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Scott, Michael	Tom Cringle's Log
Scott, Sir Walter	Prince Charlie. From *Tales of a Grandfather*
Scott, Sir Walter	*The Downfall of Napoleon*
Scott, Sir Walter	A Legend of Montrose
Scott, Sir Walter	The Talisman
Scott, Sir Walter	Tales of a Grandfather (Condensed)
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Southey, Robert	Life of Nelson
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